Indian Puberty Rites

NARENDRA NATH BHATTACHARYYA

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In the present work, which is a revised and enlarged version of the earlier edition, a remarkable attempt has been made by the well known Indologist Dr. N. N. Bhattacharyya to understand the principles which led to the emergence of the rites of the life-cycle and their functional role in different spheres of human thought and endeavour. Analysis and correlation of the basic conceptual aspects as gleaned from the puberty rites and their derivative customs and institutions have been utilised to understand certain features of ancient Indian social and religious life. The facts derived from ancient literature, especially from the Sanskrit sources, have been studied in the light of what is known of the surviving tribal and popular customs and institutions. Like other works of Dr. Bhattacharyya, the present volume is also expected to evoke much interest among the readers and to become effectively helpful for those who are working in the field of Indian social history.

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INDIAN PUBERTY RITES

Second edition: revised and enlarged

by

Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *Indian Puberty Rites* came out in 1968. It was originally submitted to the University of Calcutta as a dissertation for Griffith Memorial Prize for the year 1965. Despite shortcomings, the book could become popular and was regarded by the reviewers as a departure from the traditional line of Indological researches owing to its insistence on anthropological sources which appeared to have given a greater dimension and meaningful significance to the materials obtained from ancient literature.

The present edition which comes after a lapse of so many years has entirely been rewritten in a much wider perspective with greater emphasis on the questions of more general interest. Instead of proving something as essential facts of ancient life or as their survivals —attempts by which the earlier edition was characterized—the basic approach has now been to understand the facts as they were, the principles which led to their emergence and their functional role in different spheres of human thought and endeavour. For example, here the emphasis is not so much on proving whether the custom of Upanayana is an adaptation or development of the tribal puberty rites of the past, although it is a fact that many of the ingredients of the latter are physically present in the former, but on some basic concepts like rebirth or *dvijatva* which had not only characterized the primitive tribal rites of life-cycle but also had made way into the principles underlying the rituals of Upanayana and other forms of Indian customs, ideas and institutions including the educational system of antiquity, the procedure of religious initiation, the theoretical standpoint of the doctrine of *Karman*, the transmigration of soul and so forth.

Analysis and correlation of such conceptual aspects as gleaned from the puberty rites and their derivative customs and institutions are used here as a means to understand the vast and enormously complicated problems of Indian social history. The precise nature of the social institutions of ancient India is a question which the literary evidence is in itself too fragmentary to solve. The facts derived from ancient literature, especially from Sanskrit sources, have been studied in the light of what is known of the surviving tri-

bal and popular customs and institutions in general. But the present work is far from being what is known today as inter-disciplinary study. Here a comparative method has evidently been adopted, but the purpose of using anthropological materials is only to explain and substantiate certain features of literary findings.

That is why the methodology followed in this work is of the nature of the evolutionist approach of the past—which explains as well why so much emphasis has been laid in this work on the findings and observations of the earlier anthropological authorities—though the approach has received a diminishing importance now-a-days. Modern social anthropology is aimed at the understanding of the nature of a given culture, rather than at conjectural reconstructions of its evolution or of past events. Speculations about the early origins of human institutions and ideas which formerly provided the main drive for the beginning of anthropological studies have now been abandoned. But such speculations are useful and valid in the case of historical enquiries, and hence it is not possible for the historian to dismiss the earlier evolutionist approach in the same way as the professional anthropologists of modern times do.

Now it is for the readers to decide to what extent I have been successful. The views expressed in this book are mine and so are all its errors. My sincere thanks are due to Shri Devendra Jain of Messrs Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., without whose active insistence and constant pressure it would have not been possible for me to write the whole thing once again for the present edition. I am grateful to my exteemed friend Prof. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, the well known materialist philosopher, who had not only helped me with valuable suggestions but was also responsible for bringing out the first edition of this book when I was quite unknown to the world of scholarship. I should also thank my friend and pupil Shri Santosh Kumar Biswas of Goenka College, Calcutta, who helped me in various ways for preparing the present edition.

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1

INTRODUCTION

> From the cradle to the grave human existence has seemed to be in a state of flux 'never continuing in one stay,' a dying to be born again, exemplified in the decay and regeneration in nature. This has called forth a series of *rites de passage* at the critical junctions to obtain a fresh outpouring of life and power.[1]

Among the primitive tribes the members of a community are found graded according to age as children, adults and elders, the transition from one grade to another being effected by the rites of initiation, the most important of which is that at puberty which is an introduction to full tribal status and a precondition of marriage or sex life.

The rites which mark separation from childhood and entrance upon manhood or womanhood are called 'the rites of puberty'. An entrance into the adult group requires the observation of certain customs or the performance of certain rites. The significance of the puberty rites is expressed in primitive thought by the idea that at initiation the individual dies and is born again. Thus the qualification for admission into the adult group is not birth, but rebirth (cf. the Sanskrit term *dvija* or twice-born), restricted only to those who have undergone the appropriate rites and customs. The idea of rebirth which also characterizes the death rites probably owed its origin to the observation of plant life, its death and revival, and was linked up with fertility beliefs. Many African tribes hold that every serious event in physical life is equivalent to death followed by a resurrection.[2] The idea of death and rebirth in every turning point of an individual's life evidently contributed to the concepts of *karma*, transmigration of soul, metempsychosis and so on. Karsten observed:

[1] E.O. James, *Prehistoric Religion*, New York, 1957, p. 143.
[2] A.L. Cureau, *Savage Man in Central Africa*, London, 1915, p. 167.

> When a child is born, the life thus coming into being is not a new life in the strict sense of the word. A spirit which had existed earlier has again assumed that form. It is simply one of the forefathers that reappears in the new-born. And on the other hand, when an Indian dies, he does not by any means cease to exist. Death does not imply the extinction of life. It only implies a transition from one form of life to another . . . . Thus, the human life, including a part of the animal and plant life, presents an eternal circular course where there is apparently no beginning and no end, where only things changing are the successive incarnations and transformations through which the soul has to pass.[1]

Frazer says that the new-born is conceived as a reincarnation of the clan-totem, and that is why in different parts of the world it is or has been the custom to name the child after one of its predecessors.[2] "When a new man comes to the family, the Norsemen said expressly, 'our kinsman is born again, so and so has come back' and they confirmed their saying by giving the old name to the new one."[3] The person whose name is chosen to designate the baby must be a deceased one. Just as the ancestor is born again as an infant so at puberty the child dies and is born again as a man or a woman and the occasion is marked by giving him or her a new name after initiation.[4] New name is the symbol of rebirth or regeneration. Herakles is said to have received a new name after purification for homicide, purification being a form of regeneration. Similarly a new name is assumed at the profession of vows in the Christian Church. In India also, renaming is a feature of initiation, and it is compulsory in the case of one who is initiated into a purely religious life.

The rebirth of the initiate is often represented dramatically by a magical representation of the act of dying and being born from the womb. Sometimes the novice pretends to be devoured by a god or spirit. Sometimes the novice is laid to rest as a child and wake as an adult. Sometimes again, when the candidates are taken away for initiation, the mothers are made to mourn for them as dead, and when they return after initiation they have to behave like infants.[5]

[1] R. Karsten, *Civilization of South American Indians*, London, 1926, p. 416.
[2] J.G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, II, London, 1910, pp. 302, 453; III, p. 298.
[3] V. Gronbech, *The Culture of the Teutons*, I, Oxford, 1931, p. 287.
[4] H. Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies*, New York, 1932, p. 40.
[5] ibid, pp. 38ff.

> Even today, in the profession of vows in use among the Benedictines, the novice is laid out on the ground between four candles, and covered with a winding-sheet; the service of the dead is performed over his body and the whole congregation chants the *Miserere* for him.[1]

In India, a monk, after getting himself initiated into an Order, has to declare his past life as dead, and in some cases he has to perform his own funeral rites. In secular cases also, for example, in the case of changing caste by the performance of the Hiraṇyagarbha-mahādāna rites, the candidate had to pretend as if he was dead and born again in a new body. The performer of this ceremony uttered a *mantra* in adoration of the god Hiraṇyagarbha and entered into a *hiraṇya garbha* or 'golden womb' which was a specially prepared gold vessel 72 *aṅgulis* in height. The Brāhmaṇas then performed the *garbhādhāna*, *puṃsavana* and *sīmantonnayana* ceremonies (rites connected with childbirth) of the 'golden womb,' while the performer of the *mahādāna* (the candidate) sat inside with his head between his knees withholding his breath for a few seconds. Then he was taken out of the womb and his *jātakarman* (rites of the new born) and other ceremonies were celebrated as if he was a newly born child. He was then regarded as having assumed *divyadeha* (celestial body) as a result of his rebirth from the golden-womb, after having discarded his *martyadeha* (earthly body) which he was carrying after his birth.[2]

A vivid description of the ritual of the rebirth of the initiate is found in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.[3] The novice is to be bathed in water (equated with *retas* or semen), anointed with *navanīta* or clarified butter (symbol of the embryo according to the text) and purified with *darbha* or *kuśa* grass. Then collyrium (*añjana*) is to be given in his eyes, just as it is put in the eyes of the new born. After this, the novice has to enter and stay in a hut shaped like a female organ (*yoni*). He is not to come out of the hut and see the sun. He is to be covered at first with a cloth (symbol of the *ulva* or placenta) and then with the skin of a black antelope (*kṛṣṇājina*, symbol of the

[1] D'Alviella in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, p. 318.

[2] D.C. Sircar, *The Successors of the Sātavāhanas in the Lower Deccan*, Calcutta, 1939, pp. 50ff.

[3] 1.3; cf. A.B. Keith, *Rgveda Brāhmaṇas*, Harvard Oriental Series, no. 25, 1920, reprint, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 108-9.

uterus). So long as he stays into the hut, he has to keep his hands clasped (*muṣṭi*), just as a child remains in the womb. When all this is done, he has to come out of the hut still covering the body with that piece of cloth symbolizing the *ulva* because the baby comes out of its mother's womb under the coating of the placenta. Many features of the said ritual are still found in the Upanayana ceremony.

One of the widespread features of the puberty rites is a surgical operation or amputation of some part of the body. These are penetration of the hymen, circumcision or subincision, knocking out a tooth, amputating a finger, cutting the hair, etc.[1] In all cases the amputated part is carefully preserved which presents a parallel to the ritual of the dead, whose bodies are preserved, in whole or in part, so that they may be born again. Reference may be made in this connection to the worldwide custom of interring the corpse by doubling up arms and legs against the chest, a posture that represents the position of the unborn child in the womb. This custom, which was followed in pre-dynastic Egypt and Sumer, as well as in neolithic Europe, is still followed by many a backward tribe all over the world. In Greece, the hair was cut at the attainment of puberty, marriage and death.[2] In India hair-shaving is an essential feature of the rites of initiation and death. In some specimens of Indian ritualistic art we come across a very interesting theme which shows the cutting of hair of a man engaged in sexual union with a woman which probably indicates a relation between hair-shaving and fertility.[3]

Then the novice is to undergo trials of strength or tests of endurance, in which failure means disqualification or disgrace. The motive of the severity of these ordeals is perhaps purification. Just as application of heat is necessary to bend a piece of iron in order to give it a new shape, so also purification through a prolonged and painful test of endurance is necessary for a renewal of life. Finally the novice receives instruction in the customs and traditions of the tribe as well as in sexual behaviour.[4] The whole ceremony is secret, performed at a distance from the settlement, and often preceded by a probationary period of seclusion. When the novices return to the

[1]Webster, op. cit., pp. 32-38.

[2]G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens*, London, 1950, p. 436.

[3]D. Desai, *Erotic Sculptures of India: A Socio-Cultural Study*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 140-41, fig. XXV and phs. 134-36.

[4]Webster, op. cit., pp. 34-35, 49-66.

settlement they are strictly forbidden to reveal to the uninitiated anything that they heard or seen.

The importance of initiation at puberty becomes quite evident when we look at the primitive secret societies headed by the tribal elders. These societies bear distinctive totems, traditions and rituals, and in many cases they have magico-religious functions to perform. Without initiation into tribal secrets it is not possible to have admissibility into such groups. As for example, among certain tribes of Central India, one who has not undergone the rites of hair-shaving and ear-piercing is treated as a *bhūta* or devil, not subject to tribal restrictions as to food, etc.[1] In Fizi uncircumcised youths are regarded as unclean and as such they have no admissibility to the group of the elders.[2] Among Australian tribes, the uninitiated persons, however old they may be in age, are regarded as stupid, unworthy of receiving the honours of their ceremonies.[3]

The leading features of tribal puberty rites have been accepted in some form or other in different forms of religious initiations. As we shall see later, besides the Brahmanical Upanayana, the Jain and Buddhist rites of initiation, and also the Tantric *Dīkṣā* have retained, in theory and in practice, many traces of popular puberty rites. In Greece, puberty rites were inseparably connected with those of fertility. A marble relief dating about the 1st century AD which is now preserved in the Central Museum of Athens shows a matronly figure seated on a decorated chair on which is inscribed the word '*Increase.*' Before her, on a base is a statue carrying a basket of fruit, and on the statue is inscribed '*Fertility.*' Behind '*Fertility,*' on a Doric pillar, is a goddess of the Artemis type. Near her is an inscription '*Rite of Maturity.*' What is clear is that 'initiation' or 'maturity rite' stands both for fertility of man and for that of the fruits of the earth; for, behind the figure on the pillar is a great tree with a fillet hanging from one bough, and round the stem there is a snake, the emblem of fertility of the ground.[4] Referring to the Greek initiatory rites into the mysteries of the cult of Demeter (the Roman Ceres) Cicero observed:

[1]W. Crooke in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XXVII, p. 246.

[2]B. Thomson, *The Fizians*, London, 1908, p. 216.

[3]B. Spencer and F. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, London, 1899, p. 401; A.W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South East Australia*, London, 1904, p. 530.

[4]A.B. Cook, *Zeus*, Cambridge, 1913, p. 535, fig. 407.

> Let no one be initiated into the mysteries save those of Ceres and according to the Greek rites . . . Certainly I do, for among all the excellent and divine institutions which Athens has given to mankind, there is no better than those mysteries, which have raised us from a wild and savage state to one more noble and refined. As is indicated by the word *initia*, in very truth we have learnt the first principles of life, and not only to live happily, but to die with a hope of a better future.[1]

The sexual elements in tribal puberty rites, relics of which are also found in the initiatory and other religious rituals, even of the advanced peoples, are evidently connected with the primitive concepts of natural and human reproductivity. The magical rites intended to secure the fertility of the fields were naturally thought to belong to the special competence of women who were the first cultivators of the soil and whose power of child-bearing was believed to have a sympathetic effect on the vegetative forces of nature.[2] A critical analysis of the contents of the existing puberty rites reveals that they were primarily designed for the initiation into maturity, i.e. into the sex life. The celebration of the first menstruation, the ritual sexual intercourse, the mutilations of sex organs, or negatively, the sexual taboos as found in some special forms of religious initiations, etc. prove that all these were intended to give the boy or the girl the right of entering the sexual life. In primitive belief, though not in all cases, menstruation was regarded as an effect of sexual intercourse, and the latter was accounted necessary for the establishment of the physiological function.[3] Hence precocious sexual intercourse was not merely looked upon as permissible, but as indispensable, and was encouraged and enjoined. This may explain why ceremonial defloration in many cases was an important feature of the puberty rites of the girls, and why the later Hindu law-givers had prescribed marriage of a girl before the age of puberty. They do not give any special reason for the lowering of the marriageable age of the girls, but very often refer to a primitive belief according to which, with the growth of hair in the pubes, a girl is enjoyed by the Moon, with the flow of menstrual blood she is enjoyed by the *gandharvas*, and then by Agni.[4]

[1] *de Legibus*, II.2; II.14.
[2] R. Briffault, *The Mothers*, II, London, 1952, pp. 251-52.
[3] ibid, p. 447.
[4] *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*, I.4.16; *Saṃvarta Saṃhitā*, 64-67.

Although the Brahmanical law-books declare that the only *Saṃskāra* which should be undergone by a woman is marriage, i.e. initiation into sexual life, they also refer to such customs as the seclusion of women during their menstrual period and the rites involved therein. The rites of the first menstruation were observed by women all over India. In 1881, S.C. Bose wrote that when a Hindu maiden reached maturity she was kept in a dark room for four days, forbidden to see the sun, regarded unclean and untouchable, fed on boiled rice, milk, sugar, curd and tamarind, led to a neighbouring tank on the fifth day accompanied by five married women, and smeared with turmeric water.[1] Though he spoke of the Bengalee women, this held good in the case of women in other parts of India. Such rites were directly adopted as the cultural heritage of tribal life and were observed even by people belonging to higher castes. As Ehrenfels had rightly observed:

> Puberty rites of girls are by no means unknown among certain groups of caste-Hindus, especially in the south of India. Thus the Ārādhya Brahmins of Mysore celebrate the first menstruation with a bath, which is followed on the 16th day by the consummation of marriage, nominally already contracted long before. The Dikshitār Brahmins, also of the south, even arrange processions and caste festivities on these occasions, recalling similar ones of the Nayars. Also among the Deshast Brahmins, the first menstruation is celebrated, the girl even being seated on a little throne and accompanied by a Maratha maidservant, attending her day and night. Female relatives pay visits, bring present for the initiated girl and wash her in perfumed oil: all features which we have found characteristic among the Nayars. Consummation of marriage among these child-marriage practising Brahmins, takes place on an auspicious day after the first menstruation, but before the 16th day. The Rarhi Brahmins of Bengal seclude their daughters in a dark room during the three days of the first menstruation, where they are not allowed to see a man's face, and have to observe the same restrictions as a Brahmacārī. Very interesting in regard to the Nayar custom, is the report of J. Helene Rowlands on the first menstruation of the Bengali child wife in the middle ages. She verbally speaks of a second marriage on the occasion of which '*des cris de triomphe sonnaient de la conque, chantaient des chancous d'amour . . .*' A custom which almost seems copied from the double celebrations of the first menstruation and of the Talikettu Kalyanam among the Nayars. The Marathas of the Central Provinces,

[1] S.C. Bose, *The Hindus as They are*, London, 1881, p. 86.

too, seclude their girls at the first menstruation, celebrate a caste-festivity and make the girls bathe.[1]

Though not codified, these were customary rules. The wide popularity of the rites of first menstruation was due the peculiar attitude of the ancients towards the menstrual blood. According to George Thomson:

> It is important to observe that the magic of human fecundity attaches to the process, not to the result .... to the lochical discharge, not to the child itself; and consequently all fluxes of blood, menstrual and lochical, are treated alike as manifestations of the life-giving power inherent in the female sex. In primitive thought, menstruation was regarded, quite correctly, as the process of the same nature as childbirth ....
> Aristotle, Pliny and other naturalists, ancient and medieval, believed that the embryo is formed from the blood retained in the uterus after the stoppage of menstruation. This is the blood of life. Hence the commonest method of placing persons or things under a taboo .... menstrual, lochial or any other interdict formed on this original pattern .... is to mark them with blood or the colour of blood. And in keeping with the ambivalent nature of the taboo itself, this sign of blood has the double effect of forbidding contact and imparting vital energy .... There is no sphere of human life in which a greater uniformity can be observed than in the treatment of menstrual and puerperal woman.[2]

We have already referred to the indifference of the Brahmanical law books like the Gṛhyasūtras and Smṛtis and also of the Purāṇas towards the rites of women. But it is interesting to note that in all these works, which were composed under patriarchal influence, menstrual blood is much dreaded and menstruating women are regarded as impure, unworthy to have any place in social and religious activities. This shows that such ideas have something to with the widely practised custom of seclusion of women during their menses. It will be subsequently seen in a separate chapter that in most of the patriarchal societies puberty-initiations of the girls are rather insignificant, but all over the world there is a deeply ingrained dread which men belonging to different grades of culture universally entertain of

[1] O.R. Ehrenfels, *Mother-right in India*, Hyderabad, 1941, p. 109.
[2] G. Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, I, London, 1949, pp. 205, 209.

menstrual blood. But side by side it is also to be noted that at least there are some instances in which menstrual blood has received a sanctifying and purifying character. In the Tantras, for example, it is regarded so sacred that it is prescribed as an offering to the great goddess. The menstrual blood of a virgin is the best thing by which the goddess can be pleased. If it is not available, the blood of a married woman or that of a widow will do. From this it is apparent that the terror attaching to the primitive taboo on the menstruating woman was not in the primitive and original form of the conception, the deeply ingrained dread for impurity and unholiness. Referring to this particular difference of attitude towards menstruation, Thomson rightly observed:

> Its potency makes it something to be dreaded .... From one aspect the woman who may not be approached is inviolable, holy; from another aspect she is polluted, unclean. She is what the Romans called *Sacra*, sacred and accused. And hence in patriarchal society, after woman has lost her control of religion, it is the negative aspect that prevails.

O.R. Ehrenfels has connected the functioning and survival of menstrual rites with female-dominated culture elements with reference to such matrilineal or semi-matrilineal clans, castes or social-groups like the Agasa, Badaga, Balija, Banajiga, Banjara, Bant, Bavuri, Bedar, Bestha, Bhatrazu, Bili-magga, Billava, Bonthuk, Budubudiki, Chakkiliyan, Chaliyan, Chenchu, Cheruman, Darzi, Dasari, Devanga, Domb, Dudekula, Eravallar, Gangadikara-Okkalu, Ganiga, Golla, Gudigara, Haddi, Halepaik, Hallikar-okkaliga, Handüyogi, Hasalar, Helava, Idiga, Irula, Jangala, Jetti, Jogi, Kachagauliga, Kadir, Kannakan, Kanikar, Kappiliyan, Kapu, Kareokkalu, Karnasale, Killekyata, Kolayan, Koliyan, Komati, Koracha, Kumbara, Kunchitiga, Kurumba, Ladar, Madiga, Malapantaram, Malapulayan, Malayarayan, Mannan, Maravan, Meda, Mondaru, Morasu, Nukkuvan, Mutracha, Nagartha, Nathukottai-chetti, Nattuvan, Nayada, Nayar, Nayinda, Odde, Okkiliyan, Palli, Paliyan, Panan, Panchala, Parayan, Parivaram, Patvegara, Pulluvan, Rachevar, Sadaru, Salahuva-vakkalu, Sale, Satani, Sholaca, Sondi, Tigala, Tiyan, Togata, Toreya, Tsakala, Uppara, Urali, Valayan, Vellala, Vettuvan, Vishavan,

[1]ibid, p. 205.

Wooda and Yanadi of South India. Among these peoples puberty rites of girls and special observation of menstruation are in vogue, On the basis of cultural similarities Ehrenfels has grouped them mainly into three categories, namely, Pulayan, Parayan and Nayar. He has also taken into account the menstrual rites current among the Gond, Halba, Kaikari, Maratha, Kamar, Koshti, Kunbi, Kurmi, Lodhi, Majhwar and Pardhi of Central India.[1] But it should also be noted that among the tribes of North-Eastern India, especially among the Khasis who have maintained up to this day pronounced matrilineal features, the first menstruation is not regarded as an occasion of ceremonial importance.

Such theoretical formulations have received a diminishing importance now-a-days owing to the decline of the evolutionist approach in anthropological researches. Still in the case of the puberty rites it can be shown that their ingredients as found in one place also exist elsewhere. It is possible to detect the motives which led to their institution and prove that these motives operated widely producing in varied circumstances a variety of customs and rituals which were specifically different but generically alike. It is also possible to point out on the basis of literary evidence that many features of the puberty rites and their derivative institutions were actually at work in ancient days and are still surviving in their original form among the backward peoples of our times and in a somewhat changed and sophisticated form among peoples belonging to the higher levels of culture.

[1]Ehrenfels, op. cit., pp. 15ff.

2

THE MENSTRUAL BLOOD: SACRED AND ACCURSED

One of the motives for the restraints so commonly imposed on girls at puberty was the deeply ingrained dread regarding menstrual blood. A good number of evidence of the fear and of the customs based on it have been cited by Frazer with reference to the tribes of Australia, South-East Asia and the Pacific region, Africa and the Americas.[1] Hindu women seclude themselves at their monthly periods and observe a number of rules, such as not to drink milk, not to milk cows, not to touch fire, not to lie on a high bed, not to walk on common paths, not to cross the track of animals, not to walk by the side of flowering plants, and not to observe the heavenly bodies.[2] Among the Bhuiyars of South Mirzapur the dread of menstrual pollution is immense. Every house has two doors, one of which is used only by women in this condition. During her impurity the wife is fed by her husband apart from the rest of the family, and whenever she has to quit the house she is obliged to creep out on her hands and knees in order not to defile the thatch by her touch.[3] The Kharwars of the same region keep their women at such seasons in the outer verandah of the house for eight days, and will not let them enter the kitchen or the cow-house. During this time the unclean woman must not cook, nor even touch the cooking vessels. When the eight days are over, she bathes, washes her clothes and returns to family life.[4] Such restrictions are evidently due to the dread of the baleful influence which is supposed to emanate from women at this time.

[1]J.G. Frazer, *Balder the Beautiful*, I (*The Golden Bough*, Part VII), London, 1913, reprint, New York, 1966, pp. 76-100.

[2]L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, I, Madras, 1909, pp. 201-3.

[3]W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, II, Calcutta, 1896, p. 87.

[4]*North Indian Notes and Queries*, I, p. 67.

Among the European peasants it is believed that flowers and fruit trees are withered by contact with a menstruating woman.[1] Pliny's account of the effects produced by a menstruating woman expresses substantially the beliefs which are still current among most of the rural populations of Europe. Pliny said:

> But to come again to women hardly can there be found a thing more monstrous than is that flux and course of theirs. For if during the time of this their sickness they happen to approach or go over a vessel of wine, be it never so new, it will presently sour: if they touch any standing corn in the field, it will wither and come to be no good.
> Also, let them in this estate handle any grasses; they will die upon it: the herbs and young buds in a garden if they do but pass by will catch a blast; and burn away to nothing.
> Sit they upon or under trees while they are in the case, the fruit which hangeth upon them will fall. Do they but see themselves in a looking glass, the clear brightness thereof turneth into dimness, upon their very sight.
> Look they upon a sword, knife or any edged tool, be it never so bright, it waxeth duskish, so doth also the lively hue of ivory. The very bees in the hive die.
> Iron and steel presently take rust, yea, and brass likewise with a filthy, strong and poisoned stink, if they lay but hand thereupon. If the dogs chance to taste of women's fleures, they run mad therewith: and if they bite anything afterwards, they leave behind them such a venom, that the wounds are incurable.[2]

Menstrual blood is also dreaded in the *Quran*[3] as well as in the Mosaic Law Book of the Holy Bible. In the third book of Moses the following is said about the menstrual taboos.

> And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be *blood*, she shall be put apart seven days; and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And everything that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean; everything also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.
> And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

[1] Frazer, op. cit., p. 96.

[2] *Natural History*, VII.64ff; also XVII.266. XXVIII.38, 44, 65, 67, 73, 77, 81, 82, 84, 85 (Philemon Holland's tr); cf. Columella's *De re Rustica*, X.358ff; XI.3, 38, 50, 64; Cassinus Bassu's *Geoponica*, I. 15; X.2, 3, 14, 67; XII.2, 5, 8, 20, 25; XVI.2, 10; Porphyry's *De abstinentia*, III.3; Dioscorides's *Materia Medica*, II.99.

[3] II.122; II.228.

And whosoever toucheth anything that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.
And if it *be* on *her* bed, or on anything whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even.
And if any man lie with her at all, and her *flowers* be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.
And if a woman have an issue of her *blood* many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she *shall be* unclean.
Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation; and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation.
And whosoever toucheth these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.
And of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that is unclean.
And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath uncovered the fountain of her blood; and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.[1]

The Brahmanical law books hold that a menstruating woman must be dreaded and regarded as impure. According to Manu:

A Brāhmaṇa when engaged in dinner should be careful so that he may not see a Caṇḍāla (a man belonging to the despised caste), a menstruous woman, a boar, a fowl, a dog and a hermaphrodite. Even if one is sexually excited one should not have coition with a woman in her menses or lie with her on the same bed.[2]

In the law book of Vyāsa the following is stated.
When a woman has her menses she should abandon all her works. She will have to remain in a secluded place with shame so that she may not be seen suddenly by anyone, wearing only one piece of cloth and giving up bathing and use of ornaments. She will have to remain as a destitute without exchange of any word with others and any movement of eyes, hands and legs, only eating once at night in an earthen pot. She will have to lie on the ground without being excited, and having passed three nights in this way

[1] *Leviticus*, XV. 19-28, 33; XX.18.
[2] *Manu*, III.239; IV.40.

she will be pure on the fourth day after the rise of the sun when she will bathe and wash her clothes.[1]

The *Vṛddhahārīta-smṛti*[2] says that if a woman menstruates at the time of her husband's death, she is to be burnt alive. The *Bṛhadyama*[3] says that a menstruous woman has nothing to do with the funeral ceremonies, her very presence being undesirable on that spot. She is like an untouchable Caṇḍāla, says the *Atri-smṛti*, which warns that if anyone takes water from a menstruous woman or talks with her, he has to perform *cāndrāyana* rite in order to purify himself. It also says that when a menstruous woman dies her body should not be burnt immediately; it is to be preserved for three days.[4] On the first day of her courses she is to be treated as a Caṇḍālī (as one belonging to the despised Caṇḍāla caste), on the second as a Brahmaghātinī (as one who is guilty of killing a Brāhmaṇa) and on the third as a Rajakī (as a washer-woman).[5] She remains impure for three days and is not allowed to give collyrium in her eyes, dip in water, lie on bed, sleep in daytime, touch the fire, clean her clothes, brush her teeth, see the heavenly bodies and use utensils of copper, brass and steel during her menstrual courses.[6]

The Purāṇas also attach great importance to the menstrual flow of the women and hold that their monthly periods must not be misused.[7] In some of the Purāṇas we come across an interesting story according to which in olden times women used to menstruate only once in their life, and it is in the *Kali* age that the present system of monthly courses has been introduced.[8] To make sexual intercourse with a menstruous woman is one of the greatest sins.[9] *Mantras* should not be recited before a menstruating woman.[10] One should

[1] *Vyasa Saṃhita*, II. 37-40.
[2] VIII.203.
[3] V.7.
[4] *Atri Smṛti*, V. 49-66.
[5] *Āpastamba*, VII.4; *Parāśara*, VII. 19.
[6] *Vaśiṣṭha*, I.35.
[7] *Garuḍa*, Pūrva, XCV. 20; *Viṣṇu*, III. 8.
[8] *Vāyu*, VIII.42, VIII. 84-85; *Brahmāṇḍa*, VIII. 82-84.
[9] *Vāmana*, XIV. 40.
[10] *Śiva*, Sanatkumāra, XXIII.34.

not talk with her,[1] nor eat anything offered by her.[2] If she touches anyone she has to perform, a number of penances.[3] In the *Varāha Purāṇa* there is an entire chapter dealing with menstrual taboos.[4]

In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya it is explicitly stated that the menstruation of a woman should be properly utilised. In case of the husband's concealing the fact of his wife's being in menses or neglecting to lie with her after her menses, he shall pay a fine of 96 *paṇas*.[5] According to Indian tradition, it is only after the menstruation that a woman is able to conceive and therefore the menstruation of a woman should be rendered fruitful. That is why sexual intercourse immediately after the stoppage of menstrual flow is encouraged in the *Mahābhārata*, Purāṇas and Smṛtis. In the story of Utaṅka as recorded in the *Mahābhārata*[6] we find how a woman intending to commit adultery with her husband's disciple makes the plea of her menstruation. In the Pāṇḍu-Kuntī discourses in the *Mahābhārata*[7] we find that if a woman had sex relation with a man other than her husband it was regarded as an act of adultery, but if she did so in order to make her menstruation fruitful it was no crime at all. Though the utility of menstruation was somehow understood in this way, the attitude towards menstruous women remained the same. Menstruation is also dreaded in the older works. In the Gṛhyasūtras it is stated that a student must not see a woman in her courses.[8] After the *Samāvartana*, a student must be careful at least for three days so that he may not come across a menstruating woman.[9] Vedas must not be recited before a woman who is in her monthly impurity.[10] Those who have retired from family should not also see a menstruating woman.[11] A student must not talk or play with girls in their menses.[12]

But, as we have pointed out above, that in some cases menstrual

[1] *Agni*, CLV.25, *Kūrma*, Upari, XVI. 36.
[2] *Kūrma*, Upari, XCII.30.
[3] *Agni*, CLXX.34, 42.
[4] *Varāha*, CXLII.
[5] *Kauṭilya* III.153.
[6] I.3.
[7] I.122.
[8] cf. *Śāṅkhyayāna*, II.12.10; IV.11.6.
[9] *Pāraskara*, IV.7.48.
[10] *Śaṅkhyāyana*, IV.7.48.
[11] ibid, VI.1.3.
[12] *Khadira*, III.1.36; *Gobhila*, III.5.6.

blood, instead of being dreaded, had received a significance of holiness. At least in the primitive fertility beliefs it was regarded as quite efficacious. The identification of earth with woman, which was the basis of all fertility beliefs, gave rise to sexual rites and practices in relation to agricultural operations and other practical aspects of life. This implied that the functions of earth and those of women were alike and that the same preconditions which fertilised women were also thought to fertilise Mother Earth. Here we may refer to the fertility ritual called Ambuvācī which is observed by Bengali women on and from the seventh day of the third month of the Hindu calendar. It is believed that, during the four days of the said ritual Mother Earth menstruates in order to prepare herself for her fertilising work. During this period, there is an entire cessation of all ploughing, sowing and other field work. Widows have to undergo a number of taboos during this period since procreation is forbidden to them. This also explains the conception of menstruating earth-goddesses. In the Punjab, Mother Earth sleeps for a week in each month.[1] In the Deccan, after the Navarātra, her temple is closed from the tenth to the full-moon day while she rests and refreshes herself.[2] A similar rite of purification is made in the case of the goddess Bhagavatī of Kerala.[3] In Malabar region Mother Earth rests during the hot weather until she gets the first shower of rain.[4] In many parts of India great importance is attached to the menstruation of Pārvatī.[5] The temple of Kāmākhyā of Assam is kept closed for some time in a year because it is believed that for that period she remains unclean for her menstruation. A red liquid, prepared artificially, is sold to the devotees as her blood. We have already referred to the fact that in the Tantras menstrual blood is regarded so sacred as it is prescribed to be an offering to the great goddess. The blood of a virgin is the most desired object for worship.

Harasamparkahīnāyāḥ latāyāḥ kāmamandire/
Jātaṃ kusumamādau yanmahādevyai nivedayet//
Svayambhūkusumaṃ devi raktacandanasaṅjñitam/
Tathā triśūlapuṣpañca vajrapuṣpaṁ varānane/
Anukalpaṃ lohitākṣa candanaṁ haravallabham//[6]

[1] *North Indian Notes and Queries*, II, p. 172.
[2] M.M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, Calcutta 1921, p. 34.
[3] V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, II, Trivandrum 1906, pp. 89ff.
[4] L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., II, p. 78.
[5] *Indian Antiquary*, XVIII, pp. 155ff.
[6] *Muṇḍamālā-tantra*, Paṭala II.

It means that the flower or blood (*kusuma*) which comes out from the generative organ of a girl (*latā*) who has not as yet had sexual intercourse with a male (*hara*), is known as *svayambhū-kusuma* or *raktacandana*. It is the best means to worship the great goddess. If it is not available she should be offered *triśūlapuṣpa* i.e. the menstrual blood of a Caṇḍālī. It is to be noted that all women belonging to the so called lower castes are regarded in the Tantras as naturally initiated.[1] If the blood of a Caṇḍālī is not available, red sandalwood paste may be used as a substitute. The blood of a women whose husband is alive is known as *Kuṇḍodbhava* while that of a widow *golodbhova*:

Jīvadbhartṛkanārīṇāṃ paṅkamañceva kārayet//
Tasyā bhagasya yaddravyaṃ tatkuṇḍodbhavamucyate//
Mṛtabhartṛkanārīṇāṃ paṅkamañceva kārayet//
Tasyā bhagasya yaddravyaṃ tadgolodbhavamucyate//[2]

Before the Bhils begin sowing they set up a stone in the field and smear it with vermilion.[3] As vermilion stands for menstrual blood, the act of smearing it on the stone implies the infusion of productive energy into the earth. Many of the figures of the Mother Goddess from Mohenjodaro are painted over with a red slip or wash. The oldest extant figurines of the Mother Goddesses like the Venus of Willendorf are painted red. Some of the Egyptian, Maltese, Cyproite and Danubian figurines are also found ruddled.[4] The relation between vermilion or red ochre with the productive aspects of nature has been shown by Robert Briffault with numerous illustrations.[5] Red powder or liquid applied on the bodies of persons during the Holi festivals in India also serves the same purpose. The ashes resulting from the Holi-fire are sprinkled on the ground for increasing its fertility.[6] Thomson writes:

> It is a worldwide custom for menstruating or pregnant women to daub their bodies with red ochre, which serves at once to warn

[1] cf. *Niruttara-tantra*, Paṭala XI.
[2] *Samayācāra-tantra*, Paṭala II.
[3] W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore in North India*, Oxford, 1926, p. 250.
[4] E. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, I, London, 1937, p. 259.
[5] R. Briffault, op. cit., II, pp. 412ff.
[6] N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Contents*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 121-22, 154.

> the men away and to enhance their fertility. In many marriage ceremonies the bride's forehead is painted red . . . . a sign that she is forbidden to all men save her husband and a guarantee that she will bear him children . . . . Among the Valenge, a Bantu tribe, every woman keeps a pot of red ochre, which is sacred to her sex and used to paint her face and body for ceremonial purposes. Of the many occasions for which she needs it, the following may be noted. At the end of her confinement both mother and child are anointed with it: in this way the child will live and the mother is restored to life. At initiation the girl is painted red from head to foot: so she is born again and will be fruitful. At the conclusion of mourning after stepping over a fire, the widow is painted the same colour: so she returns from the contamination of death. Red is renewal of life. That is why the bones from the upper palaeolithic and neolithic interments are painted red. The symbolism becomes quite clear when we find, as we commonly do, that the skeleton has been laid in the contracted or uterine posture. Smeared with the colour of life, curled up like a babe in the womb . . . what more could the primitive man do to ensure that the soul of the departed would be born again?[1]

The sign of blood had the double effect of forbidding contact and of imparting vital energy. Thus one of the common methods was to mark them with blood or the colour of blood. At the same time blood or the colour of blood was regarded sacred and employed on the cult objects for sanctifying purposes. Though the menstrual blood is used only in the Tantric cults of the great goddess, the colour of blood and its smearing on cult objects are essential features of all forms of Hindu religious rituals and mode of worship. It therefore appears that there developed a spirit of ambivalence in regard to this blood of life. On the one hand we come across the concept of menstruating goddesses, their supposed blood being regarded as the most holy and efficacious thing, and on the other, we also come across a deeply ingrained dread for impurity and unholiness attributed to menstruating women.

In the next chapter we shall deal with the custom of seclusion of the girls on their attainment of puberty current among peoples in different parts of India. The Brahmanical law books do not clearly say that during the first menstruation or in subsequent menstruations a woman must have to remain segregated in a hut or in a

[1]G.Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, pp. 209-10.

specially secluded spot. But when they say that a woman in her menses should be treated as a creature of despise like the untouchable Caṇḍāla or one who is guilty of killing a Brāhmaṇa, not to be touched or seen by any body, even by a lower animal, or allowed to participate in any social or religious function, it implies that the writers of the law-books really meant something like seclusion. Moreover all the law books say that after the stoppage of menstrual flow it is only by undergoing a ceremonial bath that a woman becomes pure. This custom is followed by all tribes and castes of India. There is no doubt that the writers of the Dharmaśāstras had minutely observed the widely prevalent custom of menstrual seclusion and that they gave it a theoretical sanction by recording the popular beliefs and sentiments relating to all these.

3

MENSTRUAL RITES

As has been stated above, almost in every place of the world, the first menstruation of a girl is observed by certain rites and customs, of which the most marked is seclusion in a hut especially erected for this purpose. Sir James George Frazer has given numerous examples of seclusion of girls at their first menstruation from all the continents of the world. This custom is especially prevalent among the Zulus and kindred tribes, the Akamba of East Africa, the Baganda of Central Africa, the tribes of Tanganyika plateau, Lake Nyassa and the Zambesi region, the Thonga of Delagoa Bay, the Caffre of South Africa and the Bavili of the Lower Congo in Africa, among the inhabitants of New Ireland, New Guinea, Ceram, the Caroline islands, Indonesia and Cambodia, the islands of Torres Straits, and Australia and among the Red Indians of California and Washington, the Nookta Indians of the Vancouver Island, the Hadia Indians of Queen Charlotte Islands, the Tlingit and Tinneh Indians of Alaska, the Tsetsaut, Bella Coola, Thomson, Lillooet and Shuswap Indians of Columbia, the Delaware and Cheyenne Indians, the Esquimaux, the Guaranis, Chiriguanos and Lenguas, the Yuracares of Bolivia, and the Red Indians of Gran Chaco and Brazil in the American continents.[1] Such customs are also observed elsewhere in different parts of the world. In Ceylon, when the girl has her first monthly course, she has to undergo a confinement of two weeks. During this period of seclusion she must remain unseen by the males. When the period of seclusion is over, she comes back with her face covered by hands. A ceremonial bath of purification is then followed under a *jak* tree. Sometimes the hut, in which she was confined, is burnt.[2]

[1] J. G. Frazer, *Balder the Beautiful*, I, pp. 22-100.
[2] *Indian Antiquary*, XXXI, p. 380.

In India, it is especially in the southern region that the rites of first menstruation are observed with maximum strictness. Among the Ambattans, a caste of Tamil barbers, when a girl reaches puberty she has to observe pollution for eleven days, during which she bathes daily, and is presented with a new cloth after the period of seclusion is over. Every morning a dose of pure gingelly (sesamum indicum) oil, mixed with the white of egg, is administered on her body. The dietary must be strictly vegetarian. On the twelfth day, after a fresh bath she enters her house again when she is declared as purified.[1] All Badaga villages of Nilgiri have a hut called *holagudi* for the exclusive use of women during their monthly periods. A few months before a girl is expected to reach puberty she is sent to the *holagudi* on a Friday four or five days before the new moon day. This is done lest, in the ordinary course of events, the first menstruation should commence on an inauspicious day. The girl remains in the *holagudi* one night and returns home on the following day clad in new clothes, leaving the old ones in the hut. When she arrives at her house, she salutes all the people who are there and receives their blessing. On Sunday she goes to the houses of her relations where she is given *kedalai* (cicer arietinum) and other foods. She may not enter the inner apartment of the house until she has seen the crescent moon. Badaga women observe five days of menstrual pollution.[2]

At the puberty ceremony among the Bants of the Karnataka region the girl sits in the courtyard of her house on five unhusked cocoanuts covered with bamboo cylinder used for storing paddy. Women place four pots filled with water, and containing betel leaves and nuts, round the girl and empty the contents over her head. She is then secluded in an outhouse. The women are entertained with a feast which must include fowl and fish curry. The cocoanuts are given to a washerman. On the fourth day the girl is bathed and received back at the house. A food specially prepared with rice-powder and crude sugar is served to the guests. The girl is kept secluded for a time.[3] Among the Billavas toddy drawers of the Karnataka region, at the first menstrual period the girl is under pollution for ten or twelve days. On the first day she

[1]E. Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, I, Madras, 1909, rep. Delhi, 1975, pp. 34-35.

[2]ibid, pp. 102-3.

[3]ibid, p. 163.

is seated within a square (*muggu*), and five or seven cocoanuts are tied together so as to form a seat. A new earthenware pot is placed at each corner of the square. Four girls from the Gurikāra's house sit at the corners close to the pots. Betel leaves, areca nuts and turmeric paste are distributed among the assembled females, and the girls pour water from the pots over the head of the girl. Again, on the eleventh or thirteenth day the girl sits within the square and water is poured over her as before. She then bathes and becomes pure.[1]

Among the Kappilians of Madura and Tinnevelly a girl at her first monthly period remains under pollution for thirteen days, either in a corner of the house, which is screened off for her use by her maternal uncle, or in a temporary hut, which is erected by the same relative on the common land of the village. On the thirteenth day she bathes in a tank and, on entering the house, steps over a pestle and a cake. Near the entrance some food is placed and a dog is allowed to partake of it; but his enjoyment is marred by suffering, for while he eats he receives a sound thrashing, and the louder he howls the better, for the larger will be the family to which the young woman will give birth; should there be no howls, there will be no children. The temporary hut in which the girl passed the days of her seclusion is burnt down, and the pots which she used are smashed to shivers.[2] Similarly among the Parivarams of Madura, when a girl attains to puberty she is kept for sixteen days in a hut which is guarded at night by her relations; and when her sequestration is over the hut is burnt down and the pots she used are broken into very small pieces, because they think that if rainwater gathered in any of them, the girl will be childless.[3]

Among the Tiyans of the Malabar region, a girl is thought to be polluted for four days from the beginning of her first menstruation. During this time she must keep to the north side of the house, where she sleeps on a grass mat of a particular kind, in a room festooned with garlands of young cocoanut leaves. Another girl keeps her company and sleeps with her, but she may not touch any other person, tree or plant. Further, she may not see the sky, and woe betide her if she catches sight of a crow or a cat. Her diet must be strictly vegetarian without salt, tamarinds or chillies. She is armed against evil spirits by a knife, which is placed on the mat or carried on her per-

[1]ibid, p. 248. [2]ibid, III, p. 218. [3]ibid, VI, p. 157.

son.[1] Among the Pulayan or Cheruman of Kerala, a girl's first menstruation is celebrated with a certain amount of sophistication. The girl remains secluded in a menstruation-hut for seven days. A feast is arranged by the mother on the first and the last day. Seven girls accompany the initiated one, bathe with her in oil and water, and afterwards paint their faces yellow. Musicians of the Parayan caste play a priestlike role at these ceremonies and also exorcise devils, if such are found in the initiated girl.[2]

The Kadirs, who chiefly inhabit the Nelliampathi and Kadasseri mountains in Cochin and the Anamalai hills in the Coimbatore district strictly observe the first menstruation of the girls. During this period, seclusion in a hut is compulsory for them.[3] Puberty rites of the Parayan or Mala, who constitute the most widely spread depressed classes of the South, are similar to those of the Pulayan described above. At the final ceremony the initiated girl sits in the middle of her parents' courtyard with flowers and betel-leaves before her, and is presented with gifts by the festival guests.[4] Rites of first menstruation are also performed by the Balija, a class of Telugu merchants; the Banajiga, a Kannada-speaking merchantile class; the Bedar peasants of Karnataka and Andhra; the Bestha, a class of Telugu fishermen, the Bhatrazu, a professional class of bards and genealogist of Karnataka; the Bili-magga, weavers and traders of Karnataka; the Budubudiki, beggars, fortune tellers and peasants of Karnataka; the Chakkilian, Tamil leather workers; the Chaliyan, Malayalam-speaking weavers and other professionals of the Malabar region; the Chenchu, a jungle-tribe of Andhra Pradesh; the Domb of Karnataka and Tamilnadu; the Dudekula, Muslim Telugu and Kannada-speaking cotton cleaners; the Ganiga, oil-traders of Karnataka; the Gudigara, Kannada-speaking wood-carvers and painters; the Halepaik, toddy-drawers of Karnataka; the Hallikar Okkaliga, peasants of Mysore; the Idiga, Telugu and Kannada speaking agricultural labourers; the Irula, jungle tribe of Nilgiri, South Arcot and Chingleput; the Tamil-speaking Kannakan; the Kanikar, corrupt

[1]ibid, VII, pp. 63-64.

[2]ibid, II, pJ 65; L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, I, Madras, 1909, p. 99.

[3]Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., I, p. 5.

[4]A. C. Clayton, *Madras Government Museum Bulletin* V, no. 1, pp. 66-68.

Tamil and Malayalam speaking jungle-tribes of Kerala; the Kappilian peasants of Madura and Tinnevelly; the Karna Sale or Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh; the Killekyata, fishermen of Karnataka; the Kolayan of South Kanara and North Malabar; the Koliyan of Madura; the Maratha-speaking Kudumi of the Kerala coast; the Kumbara, Telugu and Tamil speaking potters; the Madiga, peasants and leather workers of Andhra Pradesh and adjoining regions; Malapantaram and Malapulayan, jungle-tribes of Kerala; the Malayali, a mountain-tribe of Salem district; the Mannan, jungle tribe of Kerala; the Maravan peasants of Madura and Tinnevelly; the Morasu of Conjeeveram; the Mukkuvan, fishermen of the Malabar region; the Mutracha, a warrior caste of Andhrapradesh; the Nattuvan of Karnataka; the Nayadi peasants of Kerala; Okkaliyan, the Tamil-speaking peasants of Madura and Coimbatore; the Paliyan of Kerala; the Panchala and Patvegara artisans of Karnataka; the Pulluvan, a class of Kerala astrologers; the Sadaru peasants and dealers, the Togata and Padmasale weavers, the Satani temple servants and the Tigala gardeners of Karnataka; the Tamil-speaking Toreya peasants; the Tsakala, Telugu-speaking washermen; the Uppara peasants of Andhra and Karnataka; the Urali of Travancore, Madura and Trichinopoly; the Valayan of Madura; the Vettuvan, hunters and agricultural labourers of Salem and Coimbatore; the Vishavan or Malankudi, nomadic peasants of Kerala; and other peoples of Southern India.[1]

The puberty rites of the Nayars are known as *Thirandukuli*. The main feature of these rites is the seclusion of a girl in a room. The things to be deposited in the room are a brass pot, a bundle of cocoanut blossoms and other utensils. The girl should hold in her hand a mirror specially made of a round brass plate with a handle. It is known as *Vālkannāti*. The news is circulated and the event is announced by the happy shouts of the female relatives. The entire ceremony is very much complicated. Women of the neighbouring houses visit the girl and bring new garments as presents. On the third day the relatives, friends and village peoples are invited to grace the occasion. Previously it was the rule that the initiation ceremony would take

[1]E. Thurston, op. cit., 7 Vols. *passim*; L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., 2 Vols. *passim*; H.V. Nanjundayya and L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, 4 Vols., Mysore, 1928-33 and 1935, *passim*.

place on a specially selected auspicious day, and the girl had to be made prepared for the function by a training of cautiousness. In the puberty rites of the Nayars two washermen castes, the Manans and Velans, have important functions to perform. They arrive on the fourth day. The Manans assist in the purificatory services while the Velans sing songs from the Purāṇas. The girl is oiled and washed in water in a neighbouring tank after the period of her pollution, and the party, mainly consisting of the womenfolk take her back in procession accompanied by music. On her return, drums are beaten and shouts of joy are heard. The guests are entertained with a nice dinner. Sometimes, the function of entertaining the guests is postponed to a more suitable day before the completion of which the girl is prohibited from entering into the kitchen or going to the temple for worship.[1]

The first menstruation is regarded as an occasion of ceremonial importance among some tribes and castes of Central India and those of Bihar and Bengal. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and its neighbourhood observe a menstrual rite of seclusion when their girls arrive at the age of puberty.[2] The Halabas of the same region also observe menstrual seclusion and ceremonial impurity.[3] The Kaikaris a wandering caste of basket-makers observe ceremonial impurity for five days when their girls have their first monthly courses, and at the end of the seclusion period they arrange for a great feast in which the use of cocoanut is essential.[4] The Marathas of Madhya Pradesh, too, seclude their girls at the first menstruation, celebrate a caste-festivity and make their girls bathe.[5] Among the Kamars of the same region ceremonial impurity is stressed, which concerns not only the first menstruation but all the successive monthly courses as well.[6] It is interesting to observe that among these peoples, at the time of the wife's menstruation, the husband is also obliged to undergo certain ceremonial ablutions. The Koshtis of Madhya Pradesh have ritual impurity during each menstruation.[7] The Kunbis of the South Western region, a large peasant caste, have also elaborate menstrual

[1]Thurston, op. cit., V, p. 316; Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., II, pp, 29ff.
[2]R.V. Russell and Rai Bahadur Hira Lal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, III, London, 1916, p. 72.
[3]ibid, p. 196. [4]ibid, p. 300. [7]ibid, p. 587.
[5]ibid, IV, p. 302. [6]ibid, III, p. 325.

rites.[1] Among the Kurmis ceremonial impurity and restrictions during each menstruation are prevalent.[2] The Lodhis, an important peasant-caste residing in the Vindhya hills and the Narmada district, also seclude their girls at puberty. Cocoanut is used as a fertility symbol in their puberty rites.[3] The Majhwars who have some relation with the Gonds tatto their girls at the first menstruation.[4] The Pardhis, a wandering tribe with the occupation of hunting, observe a severe seclusion of their women during each menstruation.[5]

Among the Gonds there is, or was till lately, a building, out of sight of the village to which women during menstruation are secluded. Their relatives bring them food and deposit it outside the hut, and not until they have gone away do a woman dare come out and take it. It is believed that the greater evil will befall any one who look upon a woman during her state of impurity.[6] Similar precautions are also observed by the Santals and Mundas. Among the tribes of Bengal a good number of them belonging to the same ethnic group as those of Central India and Orissa, the Bedias, Bhumijs, Birhors, Gonds, Hos, Kharwars, Koras, Lodhas, Mahalis, Oraons, Mundas and Santals are reported to have rites of the first menstruation without any ceremonial. The same holds good to the Bengal castes like the Bagdi, Bauri, Bahella, Bhuimali, Bhuiya, Chamar, Dhobi, Dosadh, Kaivarta, Malo, Keyot, Kharia, Lohar, Mali, Malla, Namaśūdra, Pod, Rajwar, etc.[7] It is interesting to note that the rites of first menstruation were performed by the higher castes of Bengal with a greater amount of strictness. For example, the Rarhi Brahmins compelled a girl at puberty to live alone, and did not allow her to see the face of any male. For three days she remained shut up in a dark room, and had to undergo certain penances. Fish, flesh and sweetmeats were forbidden to her. She lived upon rice and ghee.[8]

In Orissa, a good number of tribes and castes of the Ganjam district have the rites of first menstruation. Among the Bavuris, when a girl

[1]ibid, IV. p. 28. [2]ibid, p. 67. [3]ibid, p. 118.
[4]ibid, p. 153. [5]ibid, p. 364. [6]ibid, III, p. 83; IV, p. 67.

[7]Based on information supplied by my friend Sri Santosh Kumar Biswas of the Goenka College of Commerce, Calcutta, who is working on the rituals of the scheduled castes and tribes of Bengal.

[8]H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary*, I, Calcutta, 1891-92, p. 152.

attains maturity, she is seated on a new mat, and *zizyphus jujuba* leaves are thrown over her. The ceremony is sometimes repeated daily for six days during which sweets, etc. are given to the girl, and women who bring present are fed. On the seventh day the girl is taken to a tank and bathed.[1] The Oriya Haddis have also similar rites.[2] Among the Bathudis, an agricultural tribe of the north-western part of Orissa, prohibitions for a girl attaining her puberty are rigid. She is kept segregated in a separate room at least for a week. During the period, she is not allowed to see the face of any male member. She is fed within by another woman member of the household. A week after, she takes a purificatory bath and then wears a new cloth. It is after observance of these formalities, that she can attend to her normal household duties. In subsequent menstruations, a woman is permitted access into the kitchen and to touch the cooking utensils only after bath. No segregation is observed.[3] Among the Omanatyas of the Koraput and adjoining districts, the girl, on attainment of puberty, is kept secluded for nine days. She is kept confined in a room and in no case is allowed to stir out. No male member is allowed to see her face. Her mother and other female members serve her food during the period. On the ninth night, two girls accompany her to the village pond. They carry new earthenwares, fowls and eggs. She takes her bath and offers the fowl and eggs for sacrifice after wearing a new Sari. The *Disari* makes libation of Ghee in a *homa*. In subsequent menstruations, a woman is kept separated for some days depending on the stoppage of the flow. It is on expiry of this period that she takes her bath and is then allowed to touch the kitchenwares.[4]

Among the Bhumias of the Jeypore region of Orissa, the girl on attaining puberty is kept secluded for three to four days after which a small ceremony is performed. She takes her bath and puts on new clothes, new bangles and necklaces. The old ones are thrown to the water.[5] Among the Sountis of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj, a girl attaining puberty is secluded for seven days. She cannot be

[1]Thurston, op. cit., I, p. 179.

[2]Ibid, II, p. 313.

[3]*Census of India 1961*, XII, *Orissa*, Part V,B, *Report on Scheduled Tribes of Orissa*, Book I, ed. J.K. Das, Delhi, 1972, p. 12.

[4]Ibid, p. 19.

[5]Ibid, p. 26; cf. Thurston, op. cit., I, p. 238; Russell, op. cit., II, p. 305.

touched by anyone during this period and is not even permitted to see the face of a man. On the eighth day, she takes her purificatory bath and wears a new cloth. She is forbidden from touching the earthen pots and vessels in the kitchen in her later menstruations.[1] Among the Desua Bhumijs of Mayurbhanj, a girl in her first menstruation is kept secluded in a room for seven days where her food is served and she is not allowed to touch anyone. She does not bathe all these days. On the seventh day, she is taken to a bathing *ghat* by elderly women and relatives, and anointing oil and turmeric paste all over her body she is bathed. She then wears a new cloth and after bowing down a sacred basil plant, she chews a leaf or two. She then bows down and pay obeisance to her parents and other superiors. Her movements thereafter are kept closely under watch and she is not given the opportunity to mix freely with the members of the opposite sex. Later menstruations keep her confined for four days only when she is not allowed to touch drinking water, cooking pots, etc. Nor she is allowed to visit a temple or place of worship.[2]

Among the Jatapus of the Koraput district, on the attainment of puberty, a girl is segregated for ten days. The news is conveyed to other members of the tribe. In subsequent menstruations seclusion is observed for a period of four to seven days.[3] Among the Kharias of Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh, on the attainment of puberty, a girl is kept secluded for a period of seven days. She is prohibited from entering into the kitchen and the cowshed during this period. She has to wash her clothes and drink turmeric water on expiry of the period of pollution.[4] Among the Koli-Malhars, scattered in different parts of Orissa, the girl on attaining puberty is kept secluded for seven days during which she is forbidden from seeing the face of any male member. After her ritual bath at the end of the seventh day she wears a new robe and offers worship to the Ṭhākurāṇi, the Mother Goddess. A feast according to means is also arranged on the seventh day.[5] On the attainment of puberty, a Kotia girl of Koraput, is segregated for three days and becomes pure by a ritual bath and wearing a new cloth on the fourth day.[6] Among the Kulis of Bolangir and Sambalpur, the puberty rites of the girl are performed in absolute secrecy, though the rites are same as among other peoples.[7] The

[1]ibid, p. 40. [2]ibid, p. 59. [3]ibid, p. 67.
[4]ibid, pp. 73-74. [5]ibid, p. 82. [6]ibid, p. 88.
[7]ibid, p. 93.

Karenga girls of Koraput observe seclusion for four days at the commencement of the first menstruation.[1] On the attainment of puberty a Pentia girl of Koraput and Mayurbhanj is kept secluded for nine days during which period none is allowed to see her face except her mother who feeds her. At the end of the period of pollution, the *Disari* takes her to the river where she bathes and wears a new cloth. The *Disari* offers some worship in the presence of ten to twelve aged members of the tribe.[2]

Among the Rajuars of Mayurbhanj, the girl on the attainment of puberty is usually kept segregated for a week at the end of which some worship is offered at the bank of a pond or stream. The Brahmin presiding over the ceremony is offered presentations and a new cloth.[3] A Tharua girl, on attainment of puberty, is kept secluded for about a week on the expiry of which she is given a new cloth to wear after the ritual bath.[4] Among the Oraons of Orissa, who have also their kins in large number in Bihar and Bengal, girls on attainment of puberty are kept segregated for six to nine days. Though no restriction on food is imposed, her food is served in separate utensils. On the date of purification she takes her bath and then attends to the normal household duties. The period of avoidance in subsequent menstruation is four days only.[5]

Detailed account of the menstrual rites are not generally found in modern studies of tribes and castes, because these rites are spent forces and with the rapid growth of industrialization and urbanism they are not only fading away fast, but in many cases have become completely out of vogue, even among backward tribes and castes. Even where these are in prevalence, in many cases, because of the demands on woman's abilities and also of the economic conditions (in fact, a ceremonial rite involves monetary expense which very few peoples, especially of the backward sections, can afford), at present the general custom is that she takes her ritual bath on the very first day of the commencement of menstruation and attends to normal household work. In the case of subsequent menstruations pollution is not at all observed strictly. Still, the menstruous women as a rule do not visit places of worship or attend to any type of religious duty even today.

[1]ibid, p. 99.
[2]ibid, p. 106.
[3]ibid, p. 113.
[4]ibid, p. 119.
[5]ibid, pp. 150-51.

The Brahmanical attitude, as revealed in the Dharmśāstras, towards the seclusion of women during their menstrual period has been described in the second chapter. It is also to be noted that some features of the tribal puberty rites of the girls are incorporated into the marriage rites, especially in the *Strī-ācāra*, in the *Snāpana*, *Paridhāpana* and *Samnāhana* rites, in the *Tailaharidrāropaṇa* and others. The use of vermilion on the parting line of the hairs on the head by married Hindu women, as prevalent in many parts of India, may have an obvious link with the ideas relating to menstrual rites, the sign of blood remaining as if a symbol of her initiation into womanhood.

4

THE CEREMONIAL DEFLORATION

Defloration is another form of the puberty rites of the girls. We have already had the occasion to refer to some of the probable reasons of ceremonial defloration of girls at puberty. Strabo[1] had noticed the existence of this custom in ancient Egypt. Among the Nayars of Kerala, defloration had to take place before puberty 'in order that the girl may not be deflowered by the regular operation of nature.'[2] Among the Todas of the Nilgiri hills, ritual defloration is the main feature of the puberty rites.[3] Among the Nattu Malayans, a jungle tribe of Kerala

> A girl who has reached the age of puberty as a virgin is considered impure and no person will take her for wife.[4]

Such a custom, however, is not an isolated or unconnected event in the history of the backward peoples. The Wa-Yoas of Central Africa deflower their daughters at puberty.[5] Among some Queensland tribes, when a young girl shows signs of puberty, two or three men take her away in a bush and deflower her.

> The struggling victim has to submit in rotation to promiscuous coition with all the 'bucks' present .... She has now attained the degree in which she is allowed to marry.[6]

[1]XVII.1.46.

[2]F. Buchanon, 'A Journey from Madras' in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, VIII, p. 737.

[3]W.H.R. Rivers, *The Todas*, London, 1906, p. 503.

[4]Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., I, p. 32.

[5]H.H. Johnston, *British Central Africa*, London, 1917, p. 410.

[6]Spencer and Gillen, op. cit., pp. 92ff; *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, London, 1904, pp. 133ff.

In many parts of Africa, artificial defloration by means of a wooden instrument is carried out by old women in the course of the girls' puberty ceremonies.[1] The practice of female circumcision by trimming the lesser labia and clitoris is very widespread in Africa. It was also an immemorial practice among the Arabs. A very obscure form of mutilation is the Australian subincision practice at the age of puberty by cutting the lower wall of the urethra.[2] There is also another rite of introcision, i.e. the forcible laceration and enlargement of vaginal orifice.[3]

The Babylonian custom of religious prostitution might be a relic of an older custom of ritual defloration at puberty, according to E.S. Hartland.[4] Herodotus tells that at Babylon every woman was bound, at least once in her life to dedicate her body to a stranger in the temple of the goddess Mylitta.[5] Similar custom also prevailed in Cyprus, Corinth, Comana in Pontus, Armenia and in various parts of Western Asia.[6] In a Lydian inscription of the second century, found at Trallis, we find a lady called Aurelia Aemilia declaring with pride that she had prostituted herself in the temple service in the same manner as her mother and grand-mother had done.[7] Various theories have been set forth to explain this typical system. Its origin in variously sought in communal marriage, removal of a dangerous taboo, agricultural magic, belief in the wonder-working power of the stranger, and so on. Elsewhere I have tried to explain this custom in terms of fertility beliefs and Mother Goddess cult, because everywhere the rituals were connected with a goddess,—Mylitta in Babylon, Aphrodite in Corinth, Ma in Pontus and the like. In the epic of *Gilgamesh* Astarte is conceived as surrounded by unchaste girls and harlots. Lactantius informs that Venus instituted the custom of prostitution.[8] However, Hartland says that the Babylonian custom of religious prostitution was

[1]W. Smith and A. Dale, *Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. II. London, 1920, p. 20.

[2]E.M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, I, London, 1886, p. 75.

[3]Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 92ff; *Northern Tribes*, pp. 133ff.

[4]E.S. Hartland, *Ritual and Belief*, London, 1914, pp. 269ff.

[5]Herodotus, I. 199.

[6]N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Mother Goddess*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 11-12ff.

[7]W.M. Ramsey, *Cities and Bishoprics, in Phrygia*, I, Oxford, 1895, p. 95.

[8]N.N. Bhattacharyya, loc. cit.

originally a puberty rite and a maiden was not admitted to the status and privileges of adult life until she had thus been ceremonially deflowered.[1] He refers to a number of cases in which the women who prostituted themselves are said to be virgins or girls who were about to be married. He observes:

> When marriage follows closely after puberty, it is difficult to determine whether the custom really belongs to the puberty rites or to those of marriage.... It will be admitted that as puberty rites gradually became simplified or altogether obsolete such a custom (as defloration) could only maintain existence as part of the marriage rites.[2]

Whether the Babylonian custom was indeed a ceremony of ritual defloration at puberty may be disputed, but Hartland is correct in holding that many features of the puberty rites have maintained their existence as part of the marriage rites. It appears that the *Talikettu* or mock marriage ceremony existing among the Nayars is a relic of ceremonial defloration of the girls at puberty. Its essential incident consists of the nominal husband's tying round the neck of the girl a *Tali* or a tiny plate of gold shaped like a leaf of the Indian fig tree. Having played his part in the ritual and received the customary fee, the formal husband goes his way and is never heard of again. He has no conjugal right over the girl, nay in some places at least the fact that he has tied the *Tali* round her neck constitutes an insurmountable barrier to his becoming her husband in later life.[3] As the ceremony is very expensive, it takes place once in every ten or twelve years, and thus now-a-days, the *Tali* is often placed upon grown-up girls and little babies alike. But formerly it was a ceremony of ritual defloration. A girl was considered impure after the first menstruation until the *Tali* had been tied. In this period the girl was not even allowed to enter a temple.[4]

That the *Talikettu* was originally a puberty rite of ceremonial defloration is proved by a statement of Captain Hamilton:

[1] Art in *Anthropological Essays Presented to E.B. Tylor*, Oxford, 1907; cf. A.E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, London, 1902, p. 313.

[2] Hartland, loc. cit., p. 198.

[3] M. Billington, *Woman in India*, London, 1895, p. 80; G. Pannikar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Madras, 1900, p. 143.

[4] Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., II, p. 22.

When the Zamorin marries, he must not cohabit with his bride till the Nambudri, or chief priest, has enjoyed her and he, if he pleases, may have three nights of her company, because the first fruits of her nuptials must be a holy oblation to the god she worships. And some of the nobles are so complaisant as to allow the clergy the same tribute, but the common people cannot have the complement paid them, but are forced to supply the priests' places themselves.[1]

Duarate Barbosa reports that in his days the *Tali*-tier had the duty to perform the ceremonial defloration of the initiated girls. Even people like the Portuguese and other foreigners had been asked by the Nayar mothers to deflower a girl ritually. According to Barbosa, the mother likewise asks some young men to deflower her daughter, because the Nayars hold it an unclean thing, and almost a disgrace to deflower a woman.[2] Sir Henry Winterbotham says that this *Talikettu Kalyanam* ceremony was originally a puberty rite which was a relic from the time when the Malabar Brahmins were entitled to the first fruits and it was considered the high privilege of every Nayar maid to be introduced by them to womanhood.[3] In Bengal also the ceremonial defloration by the family preceptor or priest was known as the custom of *Guruprasādī*. Again, relics of the ritual defloration at puberty are still found in certain forms of religious initiations, like the *Gaurīgrahaṇa* or *Gaurīkaraṇa* observed by certain sects of the Śaivas, or the extraction of the first *Khapuṣpa* from a maiden for Tantric worship by piercing the hymen.

Puberty rites of ceremonial defloration have naturally made their way into the Brahmanical system of marriage. Ritual defloration is known by terms Ṛtusaṁgamana, Niṣeka, Garbhādhāna and Caturthī-karma or Caturthīhoma. In some legal texts Ṛtusaṁgamana is viewed as distinct from Garbhādhāna, though it is equated with Niṣcka.[4] But generally the term Niṣcka is regarded as equivalent to Garbhādhāna.[5] In some Grhyasūtras Caturthīkarma takes the place of Garbhādhāna.[6] Despite minor differences in regard to technical aspects,

[1]Quoted in H. Risley's *Peoples of India*, p. 200.

[2]D. Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, Eng. tr. by Stanley, Hakluyt Society, London, 1866, p. 126.

[3]L. Moore, *Malabar Law and Custom*, Madras, 1905, p. 70.

[4]cf. *Vaikhānasa Smārta Sūtra*, I. 1; III. 9-10; VI. 2.

[5]*Manu*, II. 16; II. 26; *Yājñavalkya*, I. 10-11; *Viṣṇu-dharmasūtra*, II. 3; XXVII.1.

[6]*Śāṅkhyāyana*, I. 18-19; *Pāraskara*, I. 11; *Āpastamba*, VIII. 10-11.

all these rites stand for ceremonial defloration.

Garbhādhāna as a specialized rite is mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*,[1] some of the passages of which are quoted in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.[2] The passages are quoted below:

> Now, when the monthly sickness comes upon anyone's wife, she should not drink from a metal cup, nor put on fresh clothes. Neither a low-caste man, nor a low-caste woman should touch her. At the end of the three nights she should bathe and should have rice threshed . . . .Now toward morning, having prepared melted butter in the manner of the Sthālīpāka, he takes of the Sthālīpāka and makes a libetion saying: 'To Agni, hail! To Anumati, hail! To the god Savitṛ whose is true procreation, hail!' Having made the libation, he takes and eats. Having eaten he offers to the other (i.e. to her). Having washed his hands he fills a vessel with water and therewith sprinkles her thrice saying: 'Arise from hence, Viśvavasu; some other choicer maiden seek; this wife together with her lord,' etc, Then he comes to her and says: 'This man (*ama*) am I; that woman (*sā*) art thou . . . . come let us together clasp; together let us semen mix; a male, a son for to procure.' Then he spreads apart her thighs, saying: 'Spread yourselves apart, heaven and earth.' Inserting the member in her and joining mouth with mouth, he strokes her three times as the hair lies, saying: 'Let Viṣṇu make the womb prepared,' etc.[3]

The rite of Garbhādhāna, i.e. infusing procreative semen into the womb has been conceived in terms of the performance of a sacrifice. The same Upaniṣad says:

> Her lap is a sacrificial altar; her hairs, the sacrificial grass; her skin the Soma-press. The two labia of the vulva are the fire in the middle. Verily, indeed, as great as is the world of him who sacrifices with the Vājapeya sacrifice, so great is the world of him who practices sexual intercourse knowing this; he turns the good deeds of woman to himself.[4]

While making sexual intercourse the man should utter the following *mantras*:

[1] V. 25.
[2] VI. 4, 13, 19-22.
[3] Eng. tr. by R. E. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Oxford, 1921, rep. 1962, pp. 170-72,
[4] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV. 4.3; Hume, op. cit., p. 168.

> May Viṣṇu make ready your organs; may Tvaṣṭṛ constitute your beauty; may Prajāpati sprinkle and Dhātṛ put an embryo into you. O Sinīvāli! O Pṛthuṣṭuka! make an embryo in her; may the two Aśvins wearing garland of lotuses implant the embryo into yon.[1] Just as earth is pregnant with fire, the sky with sun, the directions with winds, so also I am making so and so (the name of the woman is to be uttered) pregnant with the seed.[2]

The ceremony of Caturthīkarma is described in the Gṛhyasūtras as part of marriage rites. It is a ritual defloration performed on the fourth day after marriage. In the *Vaikhānasa Smārta Sūtra* it is called Ṛtusaṁgamana. The rite as described in the *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra*[3] is enumerated below:

> Now the rites of the fourth day. When the three nights have elapsed, he makes offerings of cooked food (with the texts), 'Agni, thou art expiation .... Vāyu, thou art expiation .... Sūrya, thou art expiation ....' 'Let him pound the root of the Adhyāṇḍa plant and sprinkle it at the time of her monthly period, with two (verses), 'Speed away from here; a husband has she (*RV* X. 85. 22.)' with Svāhā at the end of each into her right nostril. 'The mouth of Gandharva Viśvavasu art thou',—with these words let him touch her, when he is about to cohabit with her. When he has finished let him murmer: 'Into thy breath I put the sperm,' or 'as the earth is pregnant with Agni, as the heaven is with Indra pregnant, as Vāyu dewells in the womb of the regions (of the earth), thus I place an embryo into thy womb.'[4]

Caturthīkarma is also mentioned in other Gṛhyasūtras.[5] It is quite evident that this was originally a puberty rite of ceremonial defloration, which was performed after the first menstruation, and it was the appropriate time of marriage of the girls. In tribal India the girls were, as a rule, given in marriage at puberty. This also held good in the case of girls belonging to other sections of peoples. The Brahmanical law books maintain a tradition of connection between the first menstruation and marriage of a girl. Among the several require-

[1] This is adopted in the Upaniṣad from *Ṛgveda*, I.84 and *Atharvaveda*, V. 25.

[2] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV.4.22. This passage is found in other texts dealing with the rite of Garbhādhāna.

[3] I.18-19.

[4] *Sacred Books of the East*, XXIX, pp. 44-46.

[5] *Pāraskara*, I. 11; *Āpastamba*, VIII. 10-11; *Gobhila*, II.5; *Hiraṇyakeśi*, I.7.

ments of the bride to be chosen, the Gṛhyasūtras lay down that she must be a Nagnikā.[1] Mātṛdatta, the commentator of *Hiraṇyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra* holds that Nagnikā means 'one whose menstrual period is near' i.e. one who is fit to make sexual intercourse. Subsequent commentators, however, hold that Nagnikā means one who has not yet experienced the impulses and emotions of the new stage of life. The reason will be stated later. The connection between first menstruation and marriage is revealed in the expressions found in the Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis in which it is stated that the father incurs the sin of distroying an embryo at each appearance of the menses so long as the girl is unmarried.[2] In the Dharmasūtra of Gautama it is stated that the girl should be given in marriage at puberty; she is allowed to remain virgin until her third menstruation.[3] Parāśara says:

> A girl of eight is called Gaurī; but one who is nine years old is a Rohinī; one who is ten years old is a Kanyā; beyond this one is *Rajasvalā* (i.e. one who has the experience of menstruation). If a person does not give away a maiden when she has reached her twelfth year, his Pitṛs (ancestors) will have to drink every month her menstrual discharge. The parents and also the eldest brother go to hell on seeing an unmarried girl becoming *Rajasvalā*.[4]

The same is also stated in other Smṛtis.[5] The *Vāyu Purāṇa*[6] extols the marriage of a Gaurī by remarking that her son purifies 21 ancestors on his father's side and six male ancestors of his mother's side. In a later work it is stated that a Brāhmaṇa should marry a Brāhmaṇa girl who is a Nagnikā or Gaurī, the former being a girl over eight years but less than ten, and the latter being one who is between ten and twelve and has not had menstruation.[7] As the marriageable age of the girls came down, the rite of Caturthīkarma naturally became irrelevant and it was performed when the girls attained maturity long after their marriage and it accordingly came

[1] *Hiraṇyakeśi* I,19.2; *Gobhila*, III.4.6; *Manava*, I.7.8.
[2] *Vaśiṣṭha*, VII.70-71; *Baudhāyana*, IV.1.12; *Yājñavalkya*, I. 64; etc.
[3] XVIII.20-23.
[4] *Parāśara Smṛti*, VII.6-9.
[5] *Samvarta*, 65-66; *Bṛhad-yama*, III.19-22; *Aṅgiras*, 126-28.
[6] LXXXIII.44.
[7] *Vaikhānasa*. VI.12.

to be known as Garbhādhāna.

The custom of giving the girls in marriage before their attainment of puberty was evidently due to the aggressive imposition of crude patriarchal values on Indian social life. This imposition took place in an abrupt and essentially artificial way through 'three typically Indian institutions,' viz. hypergamy, child-marriage and *Satī* (burning of widows). According to Ehrenfels, hypergamy was a means to subdue the female position in society by forcing upon her social inferiority in matrimonial relations. The prevalence of child-marriage in India and the bad position of widow, intensified to the extreme in the custom of burning her alive, are also subject to the same explanation. Such extravagant means of establishing ruthless patriarchy was called for, parallels of which are, according to Ehrenfels, scarcely to be found anywhere else in human history. It was probably for breaking the resistance of the mother-right elements which were existing as ingredients of a parallel tradition, especially among the backward and tribal peoples.[1] The demand of maintaining *Varṇāśrama-dharma*, i.e. a social system based on caste-hierarchy, which was the ideal of the Brahmanical law-givers, also contributed a great deal to the establishment of the custom of child-marriage, especially in the case of the girls, because if the girls were allowed to grow up independently and to attain maturity in body and mind, they would select their life-partners according to their own choice and from any caste. In such case it would be impossible to maintain caste system. Thirdly, the conception of precocious sexual intercourse which was according to the primitive thought accounted necessary, as we have stated above, for the establishment of the physiological function of women, might have also been a factor for the institution of the system of marriage before puberty.

Still it was not easy to establish this custom absolutely. The conflict that was existing regarding the marriageable age of the girls is expressed in the law book of Manu which holds three contradictory opinions. The first is: a maiden may rather live unmarried but her father should never give her to one who is devoid of good qualities.[2] But in some Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis it is stated that the father incurs the sin of destroying an embryo at each appearance of menses

[1] O.R. Ehrenfels, op. cit., pp. 121ff.
[2] *Manu*, IX.89.

as long as the girl is unmarried.[1] Again Manu says that a maiden after attaining puberty may wait for three years, but after this period she may find out a man for her.[2] This finds support in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*.[3] In another place, Manu explicitly says that a man of thirty should marry a girl of twelve while a man of twenty-four should marry a girl of eight years.[4] This view is also shared in the *Mahābharāta*, though in some parts of the same text quite a different view is expressed. The cause of all these contradictory rules as enumerated in the Brahmanical law books lies in the fact that the law-makers had to make compromise with various local customs related to marriage. As we have stated above, from the time of the *Ṛgveda*[5] there was a mystical belief that Soma, Gandharva and Agni were the divine guardians of a girl, and according to the *Gṛhyasaṁgraha*[6] and the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*.[7] Soma enjoys a girl when she develops her pubic hairs, then Gandharva enjoys her when her breasts develop and Agni, when she menstruates.[8] Does it refer to any antiquated custom of ritual defloration by precocious sexual intercourse? In the *mantras* related to Garbhādhāna and Caturthīkarma we find the husband before making sexual intercourse with his wife addressing: 'Arise from hence Viśvavasu; some other choicer maiden seek; this wife together with her lord;' or, 'Speed away from here; a husband has she.' Such expressions reveal that the wife was conceived as possessed sexually by some deity who was asked to leave the wife's body and select another woman, for the wife now belonged exclusively to the husband. This also accounts for the feeling that the girl must be married before she develops the signs of puberty and the social cause of the said feeling is the patriarchal outlook which attaches supreme importance to female chastity. In the law books it is explicitly stated that woman's morality should not be trusted; even a mother should not live with her son in wilderness.

[1] *Vaśiṣṭha*, VII.70-71; *Baudhāyana*, IV.1.12; *Yājñavalkya*, I.64; etc.
[2] Manu, IX. 90.
[3] IV.1. 40.
[4] IX.94.
[5] X.85.40-41.
[6] Quoted in the Com. on *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra*, III. 4.6.
[7] I.4.16.
[8] cf. *Saṁvarta-saṁhitā*, 64-67.

5

OTHER FORMS OF PUBERTY RITES

Many features of tribal puberty rites have been incorporated into the Hindu Saṁskāras mentioned in the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras or Smṛtis and their commentarial works. Of these, so far as the women are concerned, the rites of menstruation and ceremonial defloration have formed essential elements of the marriage rites, since marriage is regarded in the Brahmanical tradition as the only Saṁskāra for women. In the case of the males many ingredients of tribal puberty rites like the *Caula* or hair-shaving, *Karṇavedha* or ear-piercing, etc, are found in the Upanayana ceremony of the boys. In some cases these also pertain to the girls. Suspension between the sun and the earth under a secluded condition (i.e. not to see the sun and not to touch the earth) is shared alike both by the boys and the girls, the former in their Upanayana seclusion and the latter in their menstrual. There are also different forms of ritual mutilations of the body like tattooing, piercing of nose, perforation of lips, sharpening of or knocking down of some teeth, circumcision or perforation of genital organ, etc., connected with initiation at puberty, which are neither approved nor disapproved by the legal texts, notwithstanding their wide prevalence. The rites of hair-shaving and ear-piercing have, however, made their way into the Smṛtis.

In India and elsewhere, among the backward tribes and castes, tattooing forms an important feature of the puberty rites. The Oraon girls, when adult or nearly so, are tattooed on arms and back.[1] The Majhwars of Madhya Pradesh tattoo their girls at the first menstruation.[2] The said custom also prevails among the Hala-

[1]E.T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, pp. 248-52.
[2]Russell, op. cit., IV, p. 153.

bas, Gonds, Bagias and many other castes and tribes of India.[1] Likewise the Mikirs of Assam tattoo the girls when they show the signs of puberty.[2] Among the Burmese and Nagas of Assam tattooing is a popular form of puberty rites. Charles Darwin, in drawing attention to the universality of the custom among the backward peoples observed long ago:

> Not one great country can be named, from the Polar region in the north to New Zealand in the south, in which the aborigines do not tattoo themselves.[3]

Herodotus[4] had referred to the custom of tattooing which was in vogue among the Thracian women. Pliny had written that the Dacians and Sarmatians used to mark their bodies.[5] Tattooing was known to the Pictones and other tribes of ancient Gaul.[6] The prohibition in the Third Book of Moses, 'Ye shall not make any cutting in your flesh for the dead, nor print any mark upon you,'[7] indicates that the Jews had seen these practices observed by other peoples. In India tattooing is widely practised, especially as a feature of the puberty rites, but the legal texts do not say anything about the custom.

The universality of this custom has given rise to a number of theories to account for its origin and development. Attempts have been made to explain this custom as a remedy for disease, charm against the evil eye, magical means of protection, and so forth (Westermarck), as way of making blood offering to the departed spirits, the marks being no other than the tribal marks made to express the close union with the departed ancestors (Herbert Spencer), as ceremonial blood-letting (Jevons), as intended to increase the influence of the individual over the imagination of other sex (Brown), and so on. In Sumoa,

[1] *ibid*, I, p. 386; III, pp. 124-27, 200.
[2] E. Stack, *The Mikirs*, London, 1908, p. 6.
[3] C. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, II, London, 1871, p. 339.
[4] V.6.
[5] *Natural History*, XXII.1.
[6] T.R. Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasion of Julius Caeser*, Oxford, 1907, pp. 418ff.
[7] *Leviticus*, XIX. 28.

> Until a young boy was tattooed, he was considered in his minority. He could not think of marriage, and was constantly exposed to taunts and ridicules, as being poor and of low birth, and having no right to speak in the society of men. But as soon as he was tattooed he passed into his majority and considered himself entitled to the respect and privileges of mature years.[1]

The tribal custom of ear-piercing at puberty,[2] has become an essential feature of the rituals of Upanayana. This custom is known as *Karṇavedha*. The earlier texts do not mention this rite. It is only mentioned in the *Vyāsa Smṛti* and in the *Kātyāyana Sūtra*, a supplement of the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*. The *Smṛticandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa gives a brief note on *Karṇavedha*. It is also described in the *Saṁskāraprakāśa*.[3] A faint reference to this rite may be traced in the *Nirukta*.[4] As has been stated above, it is a magical rite performed by various tribes of India and elsewhere when a girl or boy attains the age of puberty. Referring to the rite of *Karṇavedha* observed by the Gonds and other Central Indian tribes, Russell says that this particular rite should be explained in terms of fertility magic since the lobe made in the ear is supposed to have some sympathetic effect in opening the womb and making the childbirth easy.[5] Crawley thinks it to be the relic of the physical mutilations performed by the savages and holds that;

> When we find that the mouth and lips, the teeth, nose, eyes, ears and genital organs are subjected to such processes, we may infer that the object is to secure the safety of these sense-organs, by what is practically a permanent amulet or charm.[6]

Analogous rites to the Indian *Karṇavedha* are found among some American and African tribes. Among many tribes of the world it is a very common feature of the puberty rites for boys and girls to have their lower lips perforated. The teeth are also often subject to ill-treatment. Among the Kadirs of Kerala "the operation of chipping

[1] G. Turner, *Samoa*, London, 1884, p. 88.
[2] W. Crooke in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XXVIII, p. 246.
[3] Part of *Vīramitrodaya*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, p. 258.
[4] II.4.
[5] R.V. Russell, *Ethnological Survey of the Central Provinces*, VII, Allahabad, 1911, pp. 99ff.
[6] A.E. Crawley, op. cit., p. 135.

all or some of the inciser teeth, both upper and lower, into the form of sharp pointed, but not serrated cone," is performed on boys and girls.[1] Sometimes at puberty the septum of the nose is pierced.

Khitān or circumcision is an important feature of the initiatory rites of the Muslims of India and other countries. In India the Muslims regard it as 'cleansing' by performance of which the boy becomes pure, and capable of performing religious exercises, of praying and entering the mosque. In general, the popular notion is that circumcision is a token of Islam. "The court will not admit the claim of a male person to sue or defend as a Muhammadan if it appears that he has never been circumcised."[2] It is interesting to note that the *Quran* has no ordinance on this subject. Those who want to base the practice on *Quran* quote the following text: "And follow the religion of Abraham, the Hanif, who is not a polytheist."[3] It is evident that the command extends only to the rejection of polytheism and does not include other practices ascribed to Abraham. It appears that the Hebrews and the Muhammedans adopted the older Semitic rites and introduced them in their own religion.

The operation as practised by Muslims in India is performed in the following manner. A bit of stick is used as a probe, and carried round and round between the glans and prepuce, to ascertain the exact extent of the fraenum, and that no unnatural adhesions exist. The foreskin is then drawn forwards and a pair of forceps, consisting of a couple of pieces of split bamboo, five or six inches long and a quarter of an inch thick, tied firmly together at one end with a string to the extent of an inch, applied from above in an oblique direction, so as to exclude about an inch and a half of the prepuce above and three-quarters of an inch below. The forceps strongly grasping it, the next thing to be done is the removal of the foreskin which is done by one stroke of razor drawn directly downwards. The haemorrhage which follows is stopped by the application of burnt rags and ashes.

Circumcision frequently serves as a rite of puberty either along or in conjunction with other rites. It is sometimes employed in the case of the males only and sometimes in case of females as well. Circumcision of the males is best known popularly from the Semites, espe-

[1] Anantha Krishna Iyer, op. cit., I, pp. 24ff.
[2] R.H. Wilson, *Digest of Anglo-Muhammedan Law*, London, 1908, p. 92.
[3] *Sura*, III.89.

cially the Hebrews and Muhammedans as well as from the Egyptians and Colchians.[1] The operation of female circumcision by trimming the lesser labia and clitoris was practised in ancient Egypt; in Muhammedan Africa by the Gallas, Abyssinians, Wabonis, Wassanias, Wanikas, Agons, Gaffets, Gongas, Sarekolese and the tribes of Kordofan (Nubia), Balad Sudan and other places; in the non-Muhammedan Africa by the Susus, Mandingos, Massis, Wakwafis, etc.; by the Malayas of the East Indian Archipelago; in America by the Totonacs of Eastern Mexico, the Chunchos, Panos, and Tunkas of Peru and the Tecunas on the Upper Solimais in Western Brazil; and in Australia by all tribes.[2]

Circumcision is variously explained as a test of endurance, primitive, blood-rite, sexual initiation, sectarian symbols and others. According to Freud, circumcision and other physical mutilations are symbolic rites meant for loosening the boy's incestuous attachment to the mother and his reconciliation with the father.[3] According to my humble opinion it was done as a safeguard against phymosis or para-phymosis, a disease which was probably very common, owing to environmental or climatic reasons, in certain parts of the globe. A purely hygienic matter subsequently assumed the form of a puberty rite and became almost a universal custom when it received a religious sanction. According to Crawley, it may have something to do with the superstitious fear for sexual 'uncleanness.'[4] But the widely accepted explanation is that it is a puberty rite which makes the boy a man and gives him the appearance of sexual maturity. Where it is in use, it is generally considered as a necessary preliminary to marriage, 'uncircumcised' being a bad word and the women often refusing to make sexual intercourse with such a man.[5] Circumcision may thus be regarded as a means of sexual attraction, whether intended to be or not. This attitude is also reflected in the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, according to which:

> Some people argue that it is impossible to derive the maximum pleasure from a union without perforating the phallus, and accord-

[1] Herodotus, II.104ff.
[2] Briffault, op. cit., III, pp. 319ff.
[3] S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, London, 1929, p. 281.
[4] Crawley, op. cit., p. 137f.
[5] A. B. Ellis, *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, London, 1894, p. 67.

> ingly, among the people of the Southern Provinces, it is the practice for young men to perforate their phalli, somewhat as a child's ears are perforated in childhood. The method for perforating the phallus is now described. After a young man perforates his phallus with a sharp instrument from one end to the other, he should stand in water as long as the blood continues to flow (standing in water will ultimately stop the bleeding). Then at night, the young man should freely cohabit several times so that the perforation (made during the day) may not contract again or get sealed up. Thereafter, on alternate days, he should wash the hole with (fine) Kaṣāya, and with Yaṣṭimadhuka, mixed with honey (This helps to heal the wound). After that, he should try to widen the perforation with the Karṇika of Ṣiṣapatra after smearing both with the oil of Bhallātaka.[1]

Vatsyayana evidently knew about the custom of circumcision prevalent in the southern part of India, but he had no direct knowledge of the whole thing. He knew that it was done for enjoying maximum sexual pleasure. But his knowledge regarding its method was based on wrong notions. The method he prescribed was sufficient to kill a man.

Hair-shaving is also a very significant feature of the puberty rites in many parts of the world. It is a prominent feature of the puberty rites of the Omahas, Pawnees, Dakotas, Pueblos and other tribes.[2] In India as a part of initiatory and funeral rites the shaving of hair is a must. The offering of hair to the god is a well known custom all over India. The rite of hair-shaving is an important function in the ceremony of Upanayana.[3] The Buddhist initiation (*pravrajyā*) also requires hair-shaving as an integral part of the ceremony.[4] In Siam *Culakanta-maṅgala* is performed in the 9th, 11th, 13th and 15th year of a boy. In Nepal, on the third day of initiation, the boy's hairs are shaved and he is favoured with the *Triratna* and the ten precepts.[5] In Tibet also hair-shaving is an essential feature of the religious initiation.[6] This rite of hair shaving which is performed as a part of

[1] *Kāmasūtra*, VII.2.14-22; Eng. tr. S.C. Upadhyaya, p. 241.
[2] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VI, p. 477.
[3] H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, Strassburg, 1888, p. 78n.
[4] B.H. Hodgson, *Religion and Literature of the Nepalese Buddhists*, London, 1874, pp. XV, 212.
[5] L.A. Waddell, *Buddhism in Tibet*, London, 1885, pp. 173ff.
[6] W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, London, 1899, pp. 337ff.

the puberty rites in many parts of the world and which now forms an integral part of the Upanayana ceremony had its origin in the primitive belief in the magical efficacy and the wonder-working power of hair. It was probably also connected with ancient agricultural beliefs which sought to identify the growth of plants with those of hair. Among the Greeks, the hair was regarded as the seat of life. The Biblical story of Samson suggests a widespread belief that the hair itself is a source of mysterious power. The same belief prevails in the Semitic countries also.[1] In many folk tales we find also a reflection of the same belief. In different parts of South India, hair is regarded sacred, and the burning of an enemy's hair is an interesting feature of the black magic found among the peoples of this area.[2] The Spartan women cut their hair at puberty.[3]

In India the rite of hair-shaving is performed by individuals at childhood, at puberty or maturity and again at any stage of life when a death takes place in the family. The rite of the childhood is known as *Caula* or *Cuḍākarma* or *Cuḍākaraṇa*, to be performed in the first or third year of the boy or the girl,[4] while that of puberty or maturity as *Keśānta* or *Godāna*. The latter rite, according to Manu, should be performed in the 16th year by the Brāhmaṇas, in the 22nd year by the Kṣatriyas and 24th year by the Vaiśyas.[5] Subsequently, however, the rite of *Cuḍākaraṇa* and that of *Keśānta* or *Godāna* have been mixed up and it generally takes place on the day of Upanayana. The principal act of the ceremony is the cutting of the hair. Other subsidiary matters are the performance of *homa*, feeding of Brāhmaṇas, receiving of their benedictions, giving of *dakṣiṇā* (fees) and the disposal of the cut-hair. The ceremony is to be performed on an auspicious day. To the north of the sacrificial fire four vessels containing different types of corn are to be kept; to the west the candidate is to sit with two vessels filled with bull-dung and *śamī* leaves; to the south the father or the guardian is to be seated with 21 bunches of *Kuśa* grass; and to the east the barber is to stay. The hair is cut amidst the

[1] E. Thurston, *Omens and Superstitions of South India*, London, 1912, pp. 53, 115.

[2] Plutarch, *Lykurgus*, XV.4.

[3] Described in Gṛhyasūtras like *Baudhyāyana*, II.4; *Pāraskara*, II.1; *Āśvalāyana*, I.17-18; *Gobhila*, II.9.1.18; *Hiraṇyakeśi*, II.6.1-15; *Khadira*, II.3.16-33; *Sāṅkhyāyana*, I. 28; etc.

[4] *Manu*, II. 65.

[5] ibid.

shouts of the *mantras* addressed to Savitṛ, Soma, Varuṇa and other Vedic gods. The cut-hair placed in the dung of a bull is to be buried in a cow-stable or thrown in a pond or buried at the root of an Udumbara tree.

The *Keśānta* or *Godāna* ceremony which is connected with the puberty rites consists in shaving the head and also the hair on the other parts of the body, such as arm-pit, chin, etc. The word *Keśānta* has been used in the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* as well as by Manu, and Yajñavalkya,[1] while other Gṛhyasūtras prefer the term *Godāna*. The latter term is used in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[2] in the sense of hair-offering in connection with Dikṣā or consecration of the performer of a sacrifice. That this rite was originally a pure puberty rite is proved by the fact that most of the legal writers hold that this *saṁskāra* should be performed in the sixteenth year. According to the *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra*[3] it may be performed in the sixteenth or eighteenth year. The view of Manu has already been cited. The *Laghu-Āśvalāyana Smṛti*[4] says that Godāna may be performed in the sixteenth year or at the time of marriage. In the *Uttararāma carita* we find that Rāma and his three brothers, had the *godāna* ceremony performed immediately before their marriage. The sixteenth year may be calculated from the conception or from the birth.[5] Viśvarūpa[6] says that the *Keśānta* rite must have to be performed on the sixteenth year, but if anyone has his Upanayana performed later than the sixteenth year, there is no need of performing *Keśānta* once again.

According to the *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra*,[7] the *Keśānta* ceremony may also take place in the case of the girls. Its synonym *Godāna* it probably due to the fact that cattle were offered to the Brāhmaṇas after the conclusion of this rite. In some of the *Gṛhyasūtras*[8] it is stated that the rite of shaving the beard precedes a *vrata* called *Godānika*. According to the *Pāraskara*[9] and *Bhāradvāja*[10] Gṛhyasūtras gift of a single cow is sufficient while the *Gobhila*[11] and *Khadira*[12] allow optionally the gift of a pair of horses for the Kṣatriyas or a pair of sheep for the Vaiśyas. The rites of *Cuḍākaraṇa* and *Keśānta* or *Godāna*

[1]ibid, *yāj* I.36. [2]III.1.2.4. [3]I.28.20. [4]XIV.1.

[5]*Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, I.2.7; *Mitāksarā* on *Yājñavalkya* I.36; Kullūka on *Manu*, II.65; Aparārka on *Yajñavalkya*, I.36.

[6]On *Yājñavalkya*, I.36. [7]I.28.22.

[8]*Gobhila*, III.1. 11-19; *Khadira*, II.5. 7-16.

[9]II.1. [10]I.10. [11]III.1.5. [12]II.5.3.

have important functional differences. In the Gṛhyasūtras the latter has expressly been brought in relation with the instructions given to the adults. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*[1] categorically uses the term 'shaving of beard (*smasrū*)' after which, having bathed and stood up silently in the presence of the teacher, the novice would present to him a pair of cows for instruction.

[1] I.17. 7-8.

6

THE TABOOS AND KEEPING OFF EVIL SPIRITS

We have seen that one of the main purposes of the tribal rites was to transmit to the rising generation the traditions of the tribe. Those who had reached puberty were therefore initiated into adult life by special ceremonies designed to instruct them in the social code, as expressed in sexual and dietary taboos, and to impress them with a sense of inviolability of tribal custom as expounded by the elders. In many tribes the actual initiation is preceded by a period of seclusion, which may last for months.[1] We have already had the occasion to refer to the seclusion of the girls at puberty, and in many cases the period of seclusion is much longer than the actual period of the first menstruation. One of the main features of the Upanayana initiation is that the boy has to remain secluded for a few days observing a number of taboos. This seclusion for three or four days was really a preparatory stage for his studenthood in which for years he had to stay in his teacher's dormitory along with other students following a rigorous way of life as prescribed for a student in the law books. Thereafter he would return and get himself married.

Among many tribes initiation is followed immediately by marriage, which therefore is not marked by any ritual distinct from the initiation itself, especially in the case of the girls among whom postponement of marriage after puberty is rare. The boys, on the other hand, are usually obliged, in the higher grades of tribal society, to undergo a further period of probation before they can marry. This interval is spent in the Men's House. In ancient India among the advanced peoples this period of probation was regarded as the first of the four *Āśramas* or stages of life and was known as

[1] G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens*, London, 1950, pp. 21, 99.

Brahmacarya in which the student, after having his formal initiation or Upanayana, received education by staying in the *Gurugrha* or the house of the teacher in complete celibacy and restraint along with other bachelors of his rank. The tribal dormitory of the bachelors has been described by Hutton Webster as follows:

> The Men's House is usually the largest building in a tribal settlement. It belongs in common to the villagers; it serves as a council chamber or town-hall, as a guest-house for strangers, and as the sleeping resort of the men .... When marriage and the exclusive possession of a woman do not follow immediately upon initiation into the tribe, the institution of the Men's House becomes an effective restraint upon the sexual proclivities of the unmarried youth. It then serves as a club house for the bachelors .... An institution so firmly established and so widely spread may be expected to survive by devotion to other uses, as the earlier ideas which led to its foundation fade away. As guard posts where the young men are confined on military service and are exercised in the arts of war, these houses often became a serviceable means of defence. The religious worship of the community often centres in them. Often they form the theatre of dramatic representations .... The presence, then, in a primitive community of the Men's House in any one of its numerous forms points strongly to the existence, now or in the past, of secret initiation ceremonies.[1]

Such dormitories for bachelors were not previously rare among Indian tribes, and there is reason to believe that the ancient *Gurugrhas* were evidently modelled after such primitive institutions. This system has still been surviving among the Muria Gonds of Bastar in Central India, though not in the original form. But it is interesting to note that the Muria dormitories, known as *Ghotuls*, also allow the maids to stay along with the bachelors. A *Ghotul* means a hut where the bachelor boys and the maidens of the village sleep together at night. The boys are called *cheliks* and the girls *motiaries*. Every evening the *motiaries* will clean the *Ghotul* and welcome the *chelkis*. Then commences their folk dance programme which continues till late at night. Pre-marital sexual chastity is not rigidly insisted. Every *chelki* sleeps with a *motiari* as his partner. The mates are changed occasionally or regularly.[2]

[1] H. Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies*, New York, 1932, pp. 1-2.
[2] V. Elwin, *The Murias and their Ghotul*, p. 333.

Thus instead of becoming the centre of offering an effective restraint upon the sexual instincts of the youths like the ancient *Gurugṛhas* of India or the Men's Houses found among many a surviving tribe, the Muria *Ghotuls* stand for the opposite end allowing complete sexual freedom to boys and girls. It is probably due to the influence of the matriarchal cultural elements. Sexual freedom of the girls are found among many matrilineal tribes and castes of southern and central India,[1] and it is quite likely that these peoples maintain a totally different attitude towards sex life from that found in the patriarchal societies. The Tantric Guhya-samājas or secret societies, meant for initiating the novice into the creed, also permit sexual union of men and women within their circle for the attainment of some spiritual end. It is not unlikely that Tantrism is more dependent on this alternative tradition which allows sexual freedom to boys and girls than on the patriarchal tradition which insist on celibacy and total abstinence from the company of women.

In India, during the Upanayana, a boy must remain in seclusion at least for three days. During the period of this seclusion, he must not see the sun or touch the earth. He should not eat salt, and he is enjoined to sleep either on a carpet or on a deer's skin without a mattress or mosquito curtain.[2] These customs are directly adopted from the local puberty rites. It is remarkable that the foregoing two rules—not to touch the ground and not to see the sun—are observed either separately or conjointly by girls at puberty in different parts of the world. Frazer suggests more than one hundred examples from different parts of the world to show that these taboos are really significant in relation to the puberty rites. According to Frazer, the general effect of these rules is to keep the initiated one suspended, so to say, between heaven and earth. Being shut off both from the earth and from the sun, he or she can possess neither of these great

[1]e.g. among the Badaga, Balija, Billava, Budubudiki, Chenchu, Gangadikara-Okkalu, Halepaik, Hallikar—Okkaliga, Hasalar, Holeya, Idiga, Irula, Kanikar, Kapu, Killekyata, Konga-vellala, Kota, Kunnuvan, Kuruba, Kurumba, Madiga, Malasar, Malayali, Maravan, Meda, Moger, Morasu, Muduvar, Mukkuvan, Nayar, Palli, Parivaram, Poroja, Pulayan, Pulluvan, Sholaca, Tigala, Tiyan Toda, Toreya, Uppara, Urali, Valayan, Vellala, Vettuvan, Velutedan, Vishavan, Wynaad and Yanadi of South India and Barai, Chamar, Dumal, Gond, Kawar, Kohli, Munda, Kol, Nahal, Oraon, Rajjhar, Teli, and Korku of Central India. Ehrenfels, op. cit., pp. 18-35, 93-96.

[2]S.C. Bose, op. cit., p. 136.

sources of life by his or her contagion. The precaution thus taken to isolate are dictated by a regard for the safety of the initiated one as well as for the safety of others. For it is thought that the initiated one would suffer if he or she were to neglect the prescribed regimen.[1] The Zulu girls believe that they would shrivel to skeletons if the sun were to shine on them at puberty.

According to the Gṛhyasūtras, for three nights or twelve nights or a year after Upanayana, the Brahmacārī (the initiated one) should not eat *Kṣāra* (sodium) and *lavaṇa* (salt).[2] It is interesting to note that abstinence from salt is one of the leading features of puberty rites among many African tribes.[3] The initiated one has obligations to his teacher's wife and son and has to observe a number of taboos. He should speak the truth, bathe everyday and avoid honey, meat and perfumes. He should not look at the sun, sleep in day, rub oil on the body, put collyrium in his eyes, hold an umbrella, wear shoes and go in a cart. He should avoid love affairs, touch of girls, gambling, playing on musical instruments, dancing, singing and other works of this sort. He should not injure animals, use rough words, drink wine and so on.[4] He should not sleep on a cot. He should observe complete celibacy. He should not indulge himself to masturbation, and if he suffers from night emissions he should make a penance.[5] He should not wash his limbs with hot water, bathe in water in a sportive manner, indulge in sexual affairs and speak with women.[6] He should not clasp the feet of his teacher's wives, assist them at their toilet or bath, wash their feet and shampoo them.[7]

Among the Buddhists also, the initiated one has to undergo a number of taboos. At the primary stage these taboos are ten in number, called *Dasaśikṣāpadāni* or ten precepts: abstinence from taking life; abstinence from taking what is not given; abstinence from impure practices; abstinence from telling a lie; abstinence from taking

[1] J.G. Frazer, *Balder the Beautiful*, I, pp. 1-100.

[2] *Āśvalāyana*, I.22.27; *Baudhāyana*, II.5.55; *Bhāradvāja*, I.10; *Pāraskara*, II.5; *Khadira*, II.4. 33; *Hiraṇyakeśi*, I.8.2.

[3] Cole in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XXXII, pp. 309ff.

[4] *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, II.13-25.

[5] *Manu*, II.180-81, 198.

[6] *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I.3, 26-30.

[7] *Manu*, II.210-17; *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I 1.7.27, *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, II.31-33; *Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra*, XXXII, 5-15.

intoxicating drinks; abstinence from eating out of time; abstinence from dancing, singing and other sexual enjoyments; abstinence from application of perfumes; abstinence from the use of high or large couch or seat; abstinence from taking gold and silver.[1] Many of the monastic institutions and ascetic practices of the Jains have been inherited from the older religious sects of Indian society, since Brahmanical ascetics and Buddhists resemble them in many of their precepts and institutions.[2] Instructions and taboos similar to those stated above for novices are furnished in details in the Jain Sūtras.[3]

These taboos are in striking agreement with those found among various tribes of India. We shall see later that the Buddhist and Jain systems of initiation were evidently modelled on the tribal puberty rites, and as such many of the tribal cultural ingredients had naturally been incorporated into the Buddhist and Jain disciplinary codes. In Bengal, when the ceremony of Upanayana takes place, no woman or Śūdra is allowed to be present on that spot. Among the Thongas, the spot (*sungi*) where the initiatory ceremony takes place is taboo to the women. They have no right to be present there.[4] In Australia, it is the general custom that the novice must avoid women during the rites; among the Narrinyeris, he should not eat any food belonging to a woman; among the Kanaris, the novice must not eat any female animal.[5] In many parts of Africa, the system is reverse in the case of the initiation of a girl. During the girl's ceremonial seclusion at her first menstruation, males are not permitted to see her or to hold any communication with her. Among the tribes of the Tanganyika plateau, however, an exception is made in favour of a father of twins.[6]

Another important form of taboo is in relation to speech. After the Upanayana, the boy must not speak during his meal times at least for one year. Spencer and Gillen inform us that among some of the northern tribes of Central Australia the novices are kept for a certain period under a ban of silence.[7] Among some Australian tribes

[1] *Mahāvagga*, I.56.
[2] H. Jacobi in *Sacred Books of the East*, XXII, introduction pp. XXIIff.
[3] *Uttarādhyayana*, 1,1-48; *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, II.2; etc.
[4] H. Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, I, London, 1927, p. 77.
[5] Howitt, op. cit., pp. 670-74.
[6] G. Gouldsbury and H. Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Nigeria*, London, 1911, p. 159.
[7] Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 334ff.

whispering is allowed instead of speech[1] and this custom is also found among some African tribes.[2] Taboo in relation to speech also prevails at Torres Straits, Papan Gulf and in many other places.[3] It appears that the vow of silence which was employed for the purpose of religious merit and is found in various scattered passages of the *Mahābhārata* and other texts, and which is still performed in India by the saints and the wandering ascetics, is perhaps development of the ancient puberty rites in which speech was tabooed to a limited extent among certain social groups.

A good number of taboos mentioned above are on sexual matters. The novice is advised not even to touch the feet of the young wife of the teacher. In spite of this strictness there are numerous instances in ancient Indian literature of students dallying with the young wives of their teachers. Very often the provocation came from the wife of the teacher. In the epics and Purāṇas we come across the well known story of Indra's sexual affairs with Ahalyā. Indra was a student staying in the hermitage of his teacher Gautama, and during the absence of the latter, the teacher's wife and the student had sexual intercourse. In another story as recorded in the *Mahābhārata* we find that Indra persuaded the wife of a different teacher to make sexual intercourse with him, but his plan was not successful because another student named Vipula (probably a rival) kept a vigilant eye on them. The story of Utaṅka shows how provocation came from the teachers wife. She told Utaṅka that his teacher asked him to look after everything during his absence. She had her menstruation meanwhile and therefore Utaṅka should make sexual intercourse with her so that her menstruation might not be fruitless. The story of Kaca and Devayānī shows that the student very often used to fall in love with his teacher's daughter.

Some other taboos were imposed on moral and hygienic ground. But there were others with which various forms of primitive beliefs and superstitions were connected. We have already referred to Frazer's view on the taboos that concern the looking at the sun or the touching of the earth. Even if his interpretation may not be correct, it should be said that such widespread popular taboos must have a great

[1]Howitt, op. cit., p. 668.
[2]Macdonald in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XX, p. 117.
[3]Holmes in ibid, XXXII, pp. 419ff.

significance in primitive thought. In the Torres Straits, as Frazer has shown, novices are prohibited from feeding themselves. Among the Hupas, the boy or the girl after the initiatory rites must not touch the hair or face. In some cases the initiated one is not allowed to look back, wash anything, sleep or work. Similar prohibitions are found also in India. During the seclusion of Upanayana the initiated one is not allowed to touch certain persons or things. During the menstruation the women are forbidden to touch certain types of plants or animals. These were probably for keeping off evil spirits. The primitive belief on the efficacy of contagion may have also something to do with such taboos.

Numerous rules are laid down in the Indian legal texts about the Snātakas. Snātaka means a student who has completed the course of his study having resided a few years in the house of the teacher after his Upanayana. The Snātaka degree is a token of manhood. The boy is now regarded as an adult who has completed his professional training and is in a position to marry and have domestic life. According to the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*,[1] the Snātaka should not bathe at night. He should not bathe naked or lie down naked. He should not look at a naked woman except during sexual intercourse. He should not expose himself to danger, i.e. run when it rains, climb up a tree, descend into a well, swim across a river, and so on. He should avoid what is hateful to the people. He should not beg for his livelihood of anybody except the king or his pupils, but when oppressed by hunger he may beg a little, such as a piece of cultivated or uncultivated land, cows, goats and sheep, gold, etc.[2] He should not beg of a king who is not a Kṣatriya, or of one who does not follow the injunctions of the scriptures, nor should be stay in the kingdom of a Śūdra king.[3] He should not dwell in contact with sinners, Caṇḍālas and other untouchables, with fools or conceited persons,[4] not be restless in his sexual desires or with his hands and feet, speech and eyes.[5] He

[1]III.9. 6-7; cf. *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I. 11.30.6ff; II.32.29; *Viṣnu Dharmasūtra*, LXXI; *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*, II.1; *Manu*, IV.13ff; *Yājñavalkya*, I.129-66.

[2]*Vaśiṣtha*, XII.2-3; *Gautama*, IX. 63-64; *Manu*, IV.33-34; etc.

[3]*Manu*, IV.61, 84, 87.

[4]ibid, IV. 79.

[5]ibid, IV.177; *Gautama*, IX.50.

should not tell disagreeable truth or agreeable lies.[1] He should not engage in wordy quarrel with his relatives and slaves.[2] He should not wear old and dirty clothes, or garments that are dyed and black cloth even when that is its natural colour, nor should he wear the clothes, shoes and garland of another.[3] He should not allow his beard to grow, unless he has sufficient reasons; and should never keep his nails unclean.[4]

These are however normal taboos. But there are a lot of others which are quite interesting, since they reflect some aspects of primitive beliefs and practices. For example he should not blow with his mouth to kindle fire;[5] he should not hold simultaneously in his hands fire and water; he should not come between a fire and a Brāhmaṇa or between two Brāhmaṇas without their permission.[6] He should not eat food in the same plate with his wife; he should not see her while she is eating or yawning or sneezing.[7] He should not use a seat or shoe or tooth brush made of *Palāśa* wood.[8] He should not see sun rising or setting[9] or go over a rope by which a calf tied.[10] He should not point out the rainbow to another when he sees the sky, nor should he employ the term 'the bow of Indra' to denote it.[11] In relation to certain objects or conditions he should not use the exact terms but describe them somehow.[12] He should not enter a village from the west or the south or by a by-path.[13] He should not be within the village at the twilight, nor should he wander by day with his head covered.[14] It is not, however, possible to explain why such taboos were introduced.

[1]ibid, IV. 138.
[2]ibid, IV.179-80; *Yājñavalkya*, I.157-58.
[3]*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I. 11.30, 10-13.
[4]*Gautama*, IX.8; *Manu* V.35; *Yājñavalkya*, I.131.
[5]*Manu*, IV.53; *Vaśiṣṭha*, XII.27; *Gautama*, IX.32.
[6]*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, II.5.12.68; *Vaśiṣṭha*, XII.28-30.
[7]*Manu*, IV.43-44; *Vaśiṣṭha*, XII.31; *Gautama*, IX.32.
[8]*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I.11.32.9.
[9]ibid, I. 11.31.20; *Manu*, IV.39.
[10]*Manu*, IV.38; *Gautama*, IX.52-53.
[11]*Vaśiṣṭha*, XII.32-33; *Gautama*, IX.23; *Manu*, IV.59.
[12]*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I.11.31.11-14.
[13]Ibid., I.11.32.23; *Manu*, IV.73; *Yājñavalkya*, I.140.
[14]ibid., I.11.30.14.

7

UPANAYANA: INITIATION OF THE TWICE-BORN

We have already remarked that, though religious in character, the Brahmanical Upanayana has retained traces of popular puberty rites. In particular it is an initiation into the student life, but in its original spirit it is an initiation into manhood. In the case of the girls we have seen that there is a close relation between puberty and marriage, between the first menstrual flow and the age of marriage. When it is expressly stated that marriage is the Vedic Upanayana of women[1] we can not help speculating that the ceremony of Upanayana has something to do with the puberty rites. In India, it is generally held that a girl attains maturity at twelve while a boy at sixteen.[2] The marriageable age of the girls is more or less fixed by the Smṛtis in accordance with the said idea, though some of the law-books are in favour of giving away the girl in marriage before she develops the signs of puberty, the reason of which has been stated above. There is, however, an inconsistency in relation to the age of Upanayana, and this provides us with a hope to explain the whole matter in terms of puberty rites. It is to be noted that the highest age limit of Upanayana is 16 years for the Brāhmaṇas, 22 years for the Kṣatriyas and 24 years for the Vaiśyas.[3] Owing to various reasons this age-limit was lowered down, as we shall see later. The law-books declare that Upanayana is a second birth, because it is an initiation into manhood by which the initiated one has right over the Śrauta and Smārta works.[4] This shows that the candidate should at the time of his initiation attain some sort of mental and intellectual maturity so that he may grasp the essentials of his subjects of study. The highest age limit,

[1] *Manu*, II.67.
[2] cf. *Kauṭilya*, III.59.
[3] *Manu*, II.38.
[4] Ibid, II, 169-71.

the rites of hair-shaving and ear piercing, the custom of seclusion and all the various taboos can be satisfactorily explained in terms of the puberty rites. It is also important to note that supreme importance is attached to the question of *Brahmacarya*, and the initiated one has to observe a number of sexual taboos. He should avoid love affairs. He should not touch a girl or play with her.[1] He should observe complete celibacy, avoid auto-erotic habits and be careful about night-emissions.[2] In fact, a boy of eight years does not require any sexual taboo, since his impulses are not matured, but in the case of a boy attaining the age of puberty, such restrictions are invariable.

In a verse of the *Rgveda*,[3] Bṛhaspati is addressed as an 'all pervading one' as also as a 'Brahmacārī' who had received against his services a wife who was formerly taken by Soma. The passage is very much obscure, but it reflects a primitive belief, mentioned elsewhere in the same text,[4] that a girl is enjoyed by Soma, Gandharva and Agni before her marriage, a belief which has been previously noted in connection with ceremonial defloration. Here the Brahmacārī's relation to such a woman may be suggestive of some primitive tribal rites connected with puberty, though the real significance of the said verse is not clear. In the *Rgveda* we come across certain passages which indicate that some characteristics of Upanayana of the later period are already foreshadowed in them. The sacrificial post has been compared with a young person dressed in robes of initiation.[5] In the *Atharvaveda*[6] we come across a complete hymn in praise of Brahmacārī, his teaching and austerities, his collection of *samidh* or fuel-stick, his dress made of deer-skin, his begging and service to teacher and allied characteristics of Upanayana. In the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[7] we also come across the functional conception of Brahmacārī and Brahmacarya.

We have already quoted a passage from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[8] in which the rebirth of the initiate is dramatically represented. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* contains details about the life of a Brahmacārī which bear a close similarity with the principles of Upanayana. The boy comes to the teacher to get himself initiated into Brahmacarya. If the teacher is willing to take him as his student he engages him in

[1] *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, II.13-25.
[2] *Manu* II.180-81, 198.
[3] X.109.5.
[4] X.85.45.
[5] III.8.4.
[6] XI.7.
[7] VI.3.10.5.
[8] I.3.

his household work, like tending the cattle, collecting the fire-stick and so on, and advises him to observe certain taboos like not to sleep at day-time, etc. The first instruction begins with the imparting of the verses dedicated to Savitṛ.[1] In the same text we also come across the term *Antavāsī* meaning 'one who dwells near the teacher.'[2] It says that Brahmacarya is in itself a sacrificial session of long duration,[3] that the boy in his studenthood shall be responsible to Agni, Yama, the teacher and himself and that he should offer services in the teacher's house[4] and thereby protect the teacher, his house and his cattle.[5] According to *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* the period of studenthood for the mastery of all the Vedas is 48 years which being distributed among the Vedas in four parts, makes the Brahmacarya last for 12 years. The Brahmacārī should fetch *samidh* (fuel-stick) every day and beg from door to door. It is a part of the householder's duty to give alms to the Brahmacārī. A Brahmacārī should not sleep on a cot, engage himself in singing or dancing, roam about freely, spit here and there, go to a cemetery, and so on.[6]

In the Upaniṣads systematic rites of Upanayana find expression and in the Sūtra literature we come across elaborate rules about this special type of initiation. The word *Upanayana* literally means 'leading or taking near' (evidently to the ācārya or teacher for instruction). It is interesting to note that the prefix *Upa* denotes 'secret,' and hence the term was probably used in its original significance to mean the imparting of secret knowledge. It appears that the earlier rites of Upanayana were simple. The student would carry fuel-sticks with him as the token of the service he was ready to offer to the teacher and request him to accept him as his student. He would live there a plain and simple life living on alms collected from neighbouring houses and have instructions from his teacher. From the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we find that the Brahmacārī had to beg for food,[7] that he had to look after the fire of his teacher[8] and that he had to tend his cattle.[9] The period of studentship was usually twelve years.[10] The Gṛhyasūtras describe in details the whole procedure of Upanayana. We are reproducing below the account as given in the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*.[11]

[1]XI.5.4.
[2]XI.3.3.3.
[3]V.1.5.17.
[4]III.6.2.5.
[5]IV.10.1-2.
[6]XI.3.3.2.
[7]II.5-7.
[8]IV.3.5.
[9]IV.4.5.
[10]II.23.1;IV.10.1;VI.1.2.
[11]I.19-22.

I.19.

1. In the eighth year let him initiate a Brāhmaṇa.
2. Or in the eighth year after the conception.
3. Or in the twelfth a Kṣatriya.
4. In the sixteenth a Vaiśya.
5. Until the sixteen (year) the time has not passed for a Brāhmaṇa.
6. Until the twenty-second for a Kṣatriya.
7. Until the twenty-fourth for a Vaiśya.
8. After that (time has passed) they became Patitasavitṛka (i.e. they have lost their right of learning Savitṛ-mantra).
9. No one should initiate such men, nor teach them, nor perform sacrifices for them, nor have intercourse with them.
10. (Let him initiate) the youth who is adorned and whose (hair on the) head is arranged, who wears a (new) garment that has not been washed, or an antelope skin if he is a Brāhmaṇa, the skin of a spotted deer if a Kṣatriya, a goat's skin, if a Vaiśya.
11. If they put on garments, they should put on dyed (garments): the Brāhmaṇa a reddish yellow one, the Kṣatriya a light red one, the Vaiśya a yellow one.
12. The girdles are: that of a Brāhmaṇa made of *muñja* grass, that of a Kṣatriya a bow string, that of a Vaiśya woollen.
13. Their staffs are: that of a Brāhmaṇa of *palāśa* wood, that of a Kṣatriya of *udumbara* wood, that of a Vaiśya of *vilva* wood.

I.20.

1. Or all (sorts of staffs are to be used) by (men) of all (castes).
2. While (the student) takes hold of him, the teacher sacrifices and then stations himself to the north of the fire, with his face turned to the east.
3. To the east (of the fire) with his face to the west other one.
4. (The teacher then) fills the two hollows of (his own and the student's) joined hands with water, and with the verse, 'that we choose Savitṛ' (*RV*, V.82.1) he makes with the full (hollow of) his (i.e. the student's hands). Having (thus) poured (the water over his hands) he should with his (own) hand seize his (i.e. the student's) together with the thumb, with (the formula), 'by the impulse of the god Savitṛ, with the arms of the two Aśvins, with Puṣan's hands I seize thy hand, N.N.'

5-6. With (the words), 'Savitṛ has seized thy hand N.N.' a second time with (the words), 'Agni is thy teacher, N.N.'; a third time.

7. He should cause him to look at the sun while the teacher says 'god Savitṛ, this is thy Brahmacārin; protect him; may he not die.'
8. (And further the teacher says), 'whose Brahmacārin art thou? The breath's Brahmacārin art thou. Who does initiate thee, and whom does (he initiate)? To whom shall I give thee in charge?

9. With a half verse, 'youth, well attired, dressed came hither' (*RV*, III.8.4) he should cause him to turn round from the left to the right.
10. Reaching with his two hands over his (i.e. the student's) shoulder (the teacher) should touch the place of his heart with the following (half verse).
11. Having wiped the ground round the fire the student should put on a piece of wood silently. 'Silence indeed is what belongs to Prajāpati.' The student becomes belonging to Prajāpati .... this is to be understood (in the Smṛti).

I.21.

1. Some (do this) with a mantra: "To Agni I have brought a piece of wood, to the great Jātavedas. Though that piece of wood increase thou, O Agni; through the Brahman (may) we (increase), Svāhā."
2. Having put the fuel (on the fire) and having touched the fire, he three times wipes off his face with (the words), 'with splendour I anoint myself'.
3. For the splendour does he anoint himself .... this is understood (in the Sruti).
4. "On me may Agni bestow insight, on me offspring, on me splendour.
"On me may Indra bestow insight, on me offspring, on me strength (*indriya*).
"On me may Sūrya bestow insight, on me offspring, on me radiance.
"What thy splendour is, Agni, may I thereby come resplendent.
"What thy vigour is, Agni, may I thereby become vigorous.
"What is thy consuming power, Agni, may I thereby obtain consuming power" ....
With (these formulas) he should approach the fire, bend, his knee, embrace (the teacher's feet) and say to him 'Recite Sir: the Savitṛ, Sir, recite."
5. Seizing with his (i.e. the student's) garment with (his own hands) (the student's) hands (the teacher) recites the Savitṛ (first) pāda by pāda, (then) hemistich by hemistich and finally the whole (verse).
6. He should make him recite (the Savitṛ) as far as he is able.
7. On the place of his (i.e. the student's) heart (the teacher) lays his hand with the fingers upwards with (the formula), "Into my will I take thy heart; after my mind shall thy mind follow; in my word thou shalt rejoice with all thy will; may Bṛhaspati join thee to me."

I.22.

1. Having tied the girdle round him and giving him the staff he should impose the (observances of the) Brahmacarya on him ....

2. (with the words), 'A Brahmacārin art thou. Drink water. Do the service. Do not sleep in the day time. Devoted to the teacher, study the Veda.'
3. Twelve years lasts the Brahmacarya for (each) Veda, or until he has learnt it.
4. Let him beg (food) in the evening and in the morning.
5. Let him put fuel on (the fire) in the evening and in the morning.
6. Let him first beg of a man who will not refuse.
7. Or of a woman who will not refuse.
8. (In the begging he should use the words) 'Sir, give me food.'
9. Or (Sir give) *anupravacanīya* (food).
10. That (which he has received) he should announce to his teacher.
11. He should stand the rest of the day.
12. After the sunset (the student) should cook the Brahmaudana (or boiled rice with which the Brāhmaṇas are to be fed) for the *anupravacanīya sacrifice (the sacrifice to be performed* after a part of the Veda has been studied) and shall announce to the teacher (that it is ready).
13. The teacher should sacrifice while the student takes hold of him with the verse, 'The wonderful Lord of the above' (*RV*, I.18.6).
14. A second time with Savitṛ . . . .
15. And whatever else has been studied afterwards.
16. A third time to the Ṛsis.
17. A fourth time (the oblation) to (Agni) Sviṣṭakṛt.
18. Having given food to the Brāhmaṇas he should cause them to *pronounce the end of the Veda (study).*
19. From that time (the student) should eat no saline food; he would observe chastity, and should sleep on the ground through three nights, or twelve nights or one year.
20. When he has fulfilled those observances (the teacher) performs (for him) the 'production of intelligence' in the following way:
21. While (the student) towards an unobjectionable direction (on the horizon) sprinkles thrice (water) from the left to the right with a waterpot round a *palāśa* (tree) with one root, or round a Kuśa bunch, if there is no *palāśa* (the teacher) causes him to say 'O glorious one, thou art glorious. As thou, O glorious one, *lead me to glory. As thou art the preserver* of the treasure of sacrifice for the gods, thus I may become the preserver of the treasure of the Veda for men'.
22. Thereby, beginning with having the hair cut, and ending with the giving incharge, the imposing of observances has been declared.
23. Thus for one who has not been initiated before.
24. Now as regards one who has been initiated before.
25. The cutting of hair is optional.

26. And the 'production of *intelligence.*'
27. Or the giving in charge there are no express rules.
28. *And on the time.*
29. (He should recite to him) as the Savitṛ (the Ṛk) 'That we chose of the god Savitṛ (*ṚV*, V.82.1).

The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* thus prescribes the 8th, 12th and 16th year, either from birth or from conception, as the proper age of *Upanayana respectively of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas*, and the 16th, 22nd and 24th years as the highest limit. More or less a similar prescription is found in other Gṛhyasūtras.[1] The auspicious time for Upanayana is autumn, spring or summer, the fruitful seasons of the year.[2] *It* should be performed in the bright half of the month.[3] A Brahmacārī has to wear two garments, *vāsa* and *uttarīya*.[4] The upper garment (*uttarīya*) of a Brāhmaṇa should be the skin of a black deer, for a Kṣatriya that of a *ruru* deer and for a Vaiśya that of a cow of goat.[5] But these are not hard and fast rules. The initiated one must keep *daṇḍa* or staff which should be made of the *palāśa* or *vilva* wood in the case of a Brāhmaṇa, of the *nyagrodha*, or *aśvattha* or *rauhitaka* or *vaṭa* or *khadira* wood in the case of a Kṣatriya and of the *vadara* or *udumbara* or *nyagrodha* or *pilu* wood in the case of a Vaiśya.[6] The length of the staff should be as high as the head, in the case of the *Brāhmaṇas*, forehead in the case of the Kṣatriyas, and tip of nose in the case of the Vaiśyas.

A girdle made of *muñja* grass should be tied round a Brāhmaṇa boy's waist, one made of *mūrvā* grass for a *Kṣatriya and one of* hemp for a Vaiśya. This girdle is called *mekhalā*.[7] Some of the Gṛhyasūtras like *Āśvalāyana, Āpastamba*, etc. do not say any word about the sacred thread while others say that the boy already wears the *Yajñopavīta* (sacred thread) before the *homa* (oblation of wood

[1] *Āpastamba*, X.2; *Śāṅkhyāna*, II.1; *Baudhāyana*, II.5.2; *Bhāradvāja*, I.1; *Gobila*, II.10.1.

[2] *Āpas. DS*, I.1.1.19; *Hiraṇyakeśī GS*, 1.1.1., etc.

[3] *Bhāradvāja GS*, *I.1*.

[4] *Āpas. DS*, I.1.2.39f; I.31-2; *Pāraskara GS*, II.5; *Manu*, II.41.

[5] *Vasiṣṭha DS*, XI.61-63; *Par. GS*, *II.5*; *Baudh GS*, *II.5.16*.

[6] *Āśval. GS*, 1.19.13; *Āpas. GS*, XI.15-16; *Āpas. DS*, I.1.2.38; *Gautama DS*, I.21; *Baudh DS*, II.5.17; *Pār. GS*, II.5; *Kāth. GS*, XLI.22; *Manu*, I.45.

[7] *Gaut. DS*, 1.15; *Āśvl. GS*, 1.19.11.

to the fire) begins.[1] It seems that the threads of cotton were not invariable in the days of the Sūtra literature. The students might take as *Yajñopavīta* a cord of threads, a garment or a rope of *Kuśa* grass.[2] Manu says that the *Upavīta* of a Brāhmaṇa should be made of cotton and it should have three threads.[3] Generally the *Yajñopavīta* has three threads of nine strands.[4] The *Yajñopavīta* of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas should respectively be of cotton, hemp and sheep-wool.[5]

Sometimes a feast is given to the Brāhmaṇas before the ceremony begins.[6] As it appears, the boy also has to take food. The boy has to tread on a stone to the north of the fire with his right foot after *homa*.[7] He has also to taste curds thrice after repeating the verse *aadhikrāvno akārişam*. On the fourth day after the Upanayana a rite is performed called *meāhāyajña* by virtue of which it is supposed that the student's intellect is made capable of mastering the Vedas.[8] The student has to water the root of a *palāśā* tree or anoint it with *ajya* (clarified butter).[9] The fire kindled at the time of Upanayana is to be kept up for three days. The student is required to offer everyday after Upanayana a *samidh* (fuel-stick) into the fire in the morning and in the evening.[10] After giving the student the staff the teacher gives him a bowl for collecting alms. The student should first beg of a man or a woman who will not refuse. He should then beg of three women of six or of twelve.[11] Manu says that he should first beg of his mother, sister, or mother's sister.[12] Food obtained by begging is supposed to be pure. The initiated one has to perform *Sandhyā* or daily prayer at least twice.[13] The principal feature of the prayer called

[1] *Hiraṇya. GS.* I.2.6; *Bhār. GS*, I.3; *Baudh. DS*, II.5.7.
[2] *Gobhila GS*, I.2.1.
[3] II.44.
[4] *Baudh. DS*, I.5.
[5] Manu, II.44; *Viṣṇu DS*, XXVII.19.
[6] *Āpas. GS*, X.5; *Baudh. GS*, II.5.7; *Pār. GS*, II.2.
[7] *Āpas. GS*, X.9; *Mānava GS*, I.23.12; *Baudh. GS*, II.5.10; *Khadira. GS*, II.4; *Bhār. GS*, I.8.
[8] *Āśval. GS*, I.22.18-19.
[9] *Bhar. GS*, I.10; *Kath. GS*, XLI.18; *Mānava GS*, I.22.17.
[10] *Baudh. GS*, II.5.55-57; *Āpas. GS*, XI.22; *Āśval. GS*, I.22. 6; etc.
[11] *Pār. GS*, II.15.
[12] II.50.
[13] *Āśval. GS*, III.6; *Āpas. DS*, I.11.30, 8; *Manu*, II.101.

Sandhyā are *ācamana* (sipping water),[1] *prāṇayāma* (restraint of breath),[2] *mārjana* (sprinkling water by means of *Kuśa* grass),[3] *arghya* (offering water out of respect to the sun),[4] *upasthāna* (worship of Mitra and Varuṇa),[5] and the recitation of the *Gāyatrī* hymn.[6] The word *sandhyā* literally means 'twilight,' though it is used to connote prayer.

It appears that the ceremony of Upanayana was originally performed at the age of puberty in the case of the boys and it was intended for imparting to them all that passed for wisdom in olden days. Subsequently, however, when the sphere of knowledge increased and need was felt to acquire it through training, endeavour and patience and to introduce a system of schooling, the age of Upanayana had to be lowered down and it was fixed at the eighth year of the boy. A period of schooling for twelve years, known as the period of Brahmacarya, to be followed after Upanayana, was thought necessary. It was also thought that some sort of primary education should be given to the boys in order to enable them to receive Vedic knowledge after Upanayana. This called forth a mini-initiation ritual known as Vidyārambha (commencement of learning the alphabet) in the fourth or fifth year of the boy. According to the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya,[7] the prince, after the performance of Caula, should be engaged in the study of the alphabet and of arithmatic, and after his Upanayana, he is to study the Vedas, *ānvikṣīki* (metaphysics), *vārtā* (practical sciences) and *daṇḍanīti* (the art of administration). In the second act of the *Uttararāmacarita* it is stated that Kuśa and Lava were taught Vidyās (different branches of knowledge) other than the Vedas after their Caula and Upanayana. The ritual of Vidyārambha is of a simpler type, consisting of giving oblations of clarified butter into the fire in the names of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvati and honouring

[1] *Manu*, II.58-62; *Yājñavalkya*, I.18-21; *Gobhila GS*, I.1.2

[2] *Baudh. DS*, IV.1.30; *Vas. DS*, XXV.13; *Manu*, IV.70-71; *Yāj.*, 1.23.

[3] *Mānava GS*, I.1.24; *Yāj.*, I.22.

[4] *Mānava GS*, I.2.1-5.

[5] *Baudh. DS*, II.4.11-14.

[6] The Gāyatrī verse is *RV*, III.62.10 addressed to Savitṛ or the sun. Eulogies of the said verse are to be found in *Atharvaveda*, XIX.71.1; *Gopatha Br.*, I.3.233; *Taittirīya Ār.*, II.11; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*, V.14.1-6; *Āpas. DS*, I.1.1.10; *Viṣṇu DS*, IV.11-17; *Manu*, II.77.83.

[7] I.5.

the Brāhmaṇas by the payment of *dakṣiṇā*. The teacher should sit facing the east and the boy the west. The teacher then begins to teach the first lesson to the boy.[1]

Analogous to the sacred thread of the Brāhmaṇas the Iranians have also to wear a girdle called *Kusti*. It is a sacred girdle consisting of 72 threads symbolizing 72 chapters of the *yasna*; the 24 threads which make up each of the three tassels at each end of the *Kusti* symbolize the 24 sections of the *Visparad*; the six strands, each of 12 threads, into which the 72 threads of the *Kusti* are divided at the time of weaving, are said to symbolize the six religious duties of a Zoroastrian; the 12 threads in each of the strands symbolize the 12 months of the year; the six tassels symbolize the six seasonal festivals. The boy has also to wear a sacred shirt called *Sudrah*. The entire ritual consists of (a) recital of the confession of faith, (b) recital of *Nirang Kusti* (selected short prayers), (c) recital of *Yasna*, XII.8ff, as a brief summary of the Faith and (d) recital of *Tandarusti*.[2] The priest then showers over the child's head a mixture of rice and others. The function is followed by a grand feast. The ceremonies of *Nāvar* and *Mārātib* are essentially technical in nature since they are solely intended for priesthood.[3]

An interesting question is whether women ever had Upanayana performed or whether they had to wear *Yajñopavīta* or sacred thread. In the purely patriarchal Vedic tradition women had no position of honour and they were equated with dogs, crows and Śūdras. Still there are evidences to show that before the patriarchal social values were aggressively imposed, women had some sort of Vedic initiation and they could also use sacred thread. For in the *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra*[4] there is categorical mention of a bride wearing sacred thread slung from her left shoulder. In the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*[5] we come across some post-*Samāvartana* rites for women. The *Saṃskāraprakāsa*[6] quotes the lawbook of Yama which says that in former ages maidens desirous of learning the Vedas and reciting of Savitṛ used to wear

[1] *Smṛticandrikā*, I, p. 26.
[2] For the text see E.K. Anita, *Pazend Texts*, Bombay, 1909, p. 160f.
[3] D.F. Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, London, 1884, I, pp. 165-68; II, pp. 237-40.
[4] II.1.19. [5] III.8.11.
[6] Chowkhamba ed., pp. 402-3.

sacred thread, the girdle of *muñja*. She was not to wear deer-skin or black garment and was not to have her locks matted. This was also known to Manu. While speaking of the Saṃskāras from Jātakarma to Upanayana, he says that these ceremonies are to be performed in their entirety for women also, but without mantras.[1] In the *Samskāratattva* of Raghunandana and also in the medieval digests like the *Smṛticandrikā*, *Nirṇayasindhu* and others Upanayana of the girls have been indirectly mentioned as an antiquated custom.

[1]II.66-67.

8

EDUCATION AND STUDENTHOOD

The ceremony of Upanayana, as we have seen above, is a composite ritual. In the earliest stage of its evolution, it was nothing but a simple tribal puberty rite, the purpose of which was to give to the boy the status of manhood and to make him acquainted with tribal norms and behaviours, traditions and customs. In course of time, with the disintegration of tribal life and with the changes in social structure and relations, the original purpose of the primitive Upanayana had a qualitative change. Its scope was widened and it came to be looked upon as a form of initiation into religious life and also as the precondition of studenthood. The student life or probationary period lasted for a period of twelve years, and it was known as Brahmacarya which was regarded as the first stage or *āśrama* of life. The students were known as Brahmacārī. Certain rules and observances were prescribed for them. These were of two kinds. Some were prescribed for a very short time, and some had to be observed for all the years of studenthood. Avoidance of certain types of food, offering fuel-sticks (*samidh*) into fire, begging for food, sleeping on a hard place, working for the teacher, and several other observances were to be continued throughout the period of studenthood.[1] The rules centred principally round *ācamana* (purification of the body), *vāksaṁyama* (speech-control), *agniparicaryā* (maintaining fire), *bhikṣā* (collecting alms for maintenance), *samdhyopāsanā* (daily prayers), *guruśusrūsā* (service to the teacher) *samidādhāna* (collection of wood for fuel), study of Veda and so on. Now-a-days, Upanayana is a purely formal ceremonial and it is looked upon only as a token-initiation into Brāhmaṇahood. Though the present procedure of the ceremony does not differ very much from that given in

[1] *Āśval. GS*, I.22.17ff; *Baudh. GS*, II.5.55; *Bhār. GS*, I.10; *Pār. GS*, II.5; *Khadira GS*, II.4.33; *Hiranya. GS*, I.8.2; *Manu*, II.108.176.

the preceding chapter, it is a meaningless and mechanical continuation of the past, since it has nothing to do with the modern system of education.

In Greek context, George Thomson has shown how the primitive clan and tribal initiation was related to the Cretan, Spartan and Athenian educational system.[1] In Sparta boys remained in the care of their parents until they were seven. Then they were enrolled in the *agelai* or 'herds,' and lived a strictly disciplined communal life under the supervision of the elders. At the age of seventeen they were promoted from the *agela* to the *boua* or 'herd of oxen' under the protection of an *eiren* who supervised their games, fights and preparations for meals, for which they had to steal fuel and food without being detected. The *eiren* (an advanced student) taught them songs and public affairs. At eighteen the boy became a *melleiren* (a semi-advanced student), and at some time during the next two years he was subjected to the severest test of all—the public scourging of all the *melleirens* at the altar of Artemis Orthia. At twenty the *melleiren* became an *eiren* and was admitted to the *pheidition* or *philition* a club-house where the men partook of common meals. Marriage was not permitted immediately after the attainment of manhood. Girls, too, were organised in *agelai*. In Crete, boys entered the *agela* at seventeen where they were inured to physical hardships, trained in dancing, hunting and running, and also in the art of war. In Athens the boys were trained in gymnastics under the supervision of a *gymnasiarchos*. At the age of eighteen they became *epheboi*, corresponding to the Spartan *melleirenes* and were sent away for two years' military service at the end of which they underwent an examination (*dokimasia*) and were admitted to full civic status. After the collapse of the city-state as an autonomous unit, their military duties were eventually abolished and superseded by training in athletics and philosophy which attracted the Athenian youths belonging to the privileged class.[2]

One thing which is to be observed in this connection is that in Greece supreme importance was attached to the physical education and to the art of war. Insistence on communal life during the period of studenthood and on physical torture, even amounting to a barbar-

[1] G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens*, p. 128.
[2] ibid, pp. 103-7.

ous level, were outstanding of features early Greek educational system. Plutarch records that he had himself seen several boys die without a murmer during this brutal ordeal.[1] To speak of the Indian system, things were similar, though not the same. In India, there was a rapid development of class society owing to the fertility and abundance of land which quickened the accumulation of social surplus in the hands of a few. This resulted in the growth of a privileged non-productive class consisting of the Brāhmaṇa (priestly and intellectual) and Kṣatriya (warrior) castes. Matters relating to warfare and also of administration rested on the Kṣatriyas. About their administrative training we learn something from the later Smṛtis and the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, but so far as their military training was concerned, especially of the earlier period, from the scattered references found in the *Mahābhārata* and some other earlier texts, it may be said with some amount of certainty that during their probationary period, they had to endure much hardship and torture to become a good soldier. Whether this was of the same degree as that in Greece is difficult to say at the present state of our knowledge, because the texts were professionally composed by the Brāhmaṇas and they are burdened with the details about the Brāhmaṇical educational system. Still, the lot of a Brāhmaṇa student was no better. The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*[2] recommends threatening, keeping in starvation and drenching in cold water, while Manu[3] and others prescribe corporal punishment. How they were treated by their teachers may be understood from the following story as recorded in the *Mahābhārata*.[4]

> Upamanyu was the student of a teacher named Āyodhadhaumya. The teacher asked him to look after his cows. All day long Upamanyu tended the cows in the pasture, and at evening when he returned, the teacher asked what had made him look so healthy. Upamanyu replied that he had managed to have his food by begging. At this the teacher said that, since the alms collected by a student belonged to the teacher, henceforth he must give him all he would receive of begging. A few days later the teacher again asked Upamanyu what had made him look so healthy, and when he learnt that Upamanyu, after handing the alms collected by him over to the teacher, begged for his own food only one handful of

[1] *Lycurgus*, 16ff.
[2] I.2. 8.29-30.
[3] VIII.299-300.
[4] I.3.

cereals, he bade him not to beg for a second time. A few days later the teacher was surprised to see Upamanyu quite healthy and on enquiry he came to know that Upamanyu used to drink milk which was available to him because he tended the cows. He told Upamanyu sternly that he had not given him permission to drink milk, and henceforth he should not do it. A few days later when the teacher saw him healthy and asked about it, Upamanyu replied that he was living on the foams left by the calves after drinking milk from their mothers. Even this was forbidden to him, and thereafter driven by hunger Upamanyu began to eat leaves of unknown plants. One day having eaten the leaves of a poisonous plant named *arka* he became blind and fell into a well.

The teacher, variously called Ācārya, Guru and Upādhyāya, was the pivot of the whole educational system. The Ācāryas belonged to a superior category. Manu says that an Ācārya is ten times superior to an Upādhyāya. The latter is one who teaches only a portion of the Veda or the Vedāṅgas.[1] Whatever their relative position might have been, to the students the teacher was next to god, always behaving like a tyrant. It was only by constant service and flattery that he was to be pleased. Satyakāma Jabāla did not teach his pupil Upakosala, though the latter served him assiduously for twelve years.[2] Not every one was equally learned, and some of them were even class one cheats. We come across references to unhappy students travelling in quest of a genuinely learned teacher. But there were some teachers greatly renowned for their knowledge and students used to flock around him from different places 'as waters flowing down a slope.'[3] There were also students who wandered from teacher to teacher. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*[4] refers to such students as *tīrthakāka* (crows at a sacred place). There were also wandering teachers like the famous Bālāki Gārgya or Bhujyu Lāhyāyanī of the Upaniṣads. In the Buddha's time we come across a lot of wandering teachers who like the Greek sophists lectured on various problems of knowledge. But in the earlier period the teachers generally opened residential schools where they lived. The desirous students should come with fuel-sticks and request the teacher to receive him

[1] *Manu*, II.141ff.
[2] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, IV.10.
[3] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I.4.3.
[4] on Pāṇini, II.1.41.

as his student. The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*,[1] lays down that a teacher should be anxious for the welfare of the student as if he were his own son and should impart knowledge to the student without hiding anything from him. According to the *Mahābhārata*, if a teacher does not teach a pupil anything even after the pupil has stayed with him for a year, the former receives all the sins of the pupil.[2]

The students had to acquire knowledge in the Vedas during the period of their Brahmacarya. This Vedic study did not necessarily mean the study of the Vedic texts. The Vedas consist of heterogeneous elements contributing to all forms of primitive knowledge, from brewing to wine to the highest cosmogonical speculations. Subsequently however, the Vedic language become obscure, the real meaning and significance of the original passages forgotten, artificial and imaginary interpretations invented, the basic contents overlooked, and eventually the Vedas came to be looked upon as a symbol of spiritual knowledge, a very sacred and unchallengable tradition, a thing not to be lightly approached, and a violent taboo for ordinary people. Its study and interpretation were monopolised by persons belonging to the dominant class who denied the existence of any empirical knowledge in them, highlighted the illusions and stamped out the realities. This contempt for worldly knowledge was possible, because after the disintegration of all ancient tribal societies one section of the community living on the surplus produced by another withdrew itself from the responsibility of labour and hence from the obligation of acknowledging the reality of the material world, thus creating the illusion of 'pure knowledge,' the knowledge of *Brahman*. This had also happened in Greece where, with the growth of the elaborate institution of slavery, the illusion of 'pure knowledge' became the driving force of philosophical speculation. Empirical knowledge on which Heraklitos laid so much emphasis was relegated by Plato to a kind of limbo, the bastard knowledge of the slave.[3]

We do not know when and how this contemptuous attitude towards worldly knowledge began to gain ground in India. The gen-

[1] I.2.8.25-28.
[2] VII.50.21.
[3] B. Farrington, *Greek Sciences*, 1, London, 1944, pp. 105-6.

uinely earlier portions of the *Ṛgveda* knew neither caste-distinctions nor contempt for empirical knowledge and its functioning in different spheres of life. Far from being looked down upon with contempt, arts and crafts were originally considered so important that Tvāṣṭṛ, the craftsman, was raised to the status of a powerful deity. The making of the world was conceived in terms of wood craft, done as if by a carpenter's or joiner's skill.[1] Subsequently, however, this attitude was not maintained which may be illustrated with reference to what happened to the fate of the Aśvins, the master-physicians, whose position was lowered and right of drinking *Soma* in the assembly of gods denied. Material sciences came to be known as *avidyā* or false knowledge. According to the Dharmasūtras, Vedas and agriculture are destructive of each other.[2] Manu says that even when compelled to follow the profession of Vaiśya, the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas must avoid agriculture, because it is slavish and involves injury.[3] The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[4] contains an interesting story which incidentally throws light on the conflict between material knowledge and the so-called 'pure knowledge.' Śvetaketu, son of (Uddālaka) Āruṇi being commanded by his father, repaired to a teacher and returned home after twelve years, quite confident of the knowledge of the Vedas. Then his father asked: 'Have you, O Śvetaketu, enquired of your tutor about the subject which makes the unheard of heard, the unconsidered considered and the unsettled settled?' In other words, he wanted to know whether his son had acquired any knowledge about the new-fangled concept of *Brahman*, the aim of the so-called 'pure knowledge.' Śvetaketu's frank answer was: 'Verily my learned teachers knew it not. Had they known it, why should they have omitted to impart it to me'? Evidently the tutors of Śvetaketu meant by the Vedas empirical knowledge which they had imparted to their pupil.

Here our purpose is to deal with the life of a Brahmacārī or an inquisitive student who after his formal Upanayana used to resort to a teacher for learning and stay with him for a period of no less than twelve years, after the completion of which he was ordinarily destined

[1] *Ṛgveda*, X.31.7; X.72.2; X.81.2-4.
[2] cf. *Baudhāyana*, 1.5.101.
[3] X.83-84.
[4] VI.1.

to get himself married and have a settled life. But we cannot ignore the role of the teacher and the problems of the subjects in which they were taught. Although from the Upaniṣadic period we come across increasing insistence on 'pure knowledge' as opposed to the worldly empirical knowledge by the intellectuals belonging to the upper strata of society, since the country was vast and its development uneven, the cult of 'pure knowledge' had to face challenges from many quarters, though it eventually succeeded in establishing itself as the ultimate aim of human life. Still there was need of some sort of professional training, because the society had already become caste-ridden on the basis of occupations. As for the education of the Śūdras there are hardly any rules in the Dharmaśāstras. Since they were no better than slaves and their function was to serve the higher Varṇas, the so-called Dvijas or twice-born, the law-makers did not consider them worthy of having initiation or education. The line of thinking of the Indian law-makers was the same as that of Plato who in his *Laws* argued:

> We have now made excellent arrangement to free our citizens from the necessity of manual labour; the business of the arts and crafts has been passed on the others: agriculture has been handed over to slaves on condition of their granting us a sufficient return to live in a fit and seemly fashion; how now shall we organise our lives?[1]

Indian law-makers were also busy in determining how the higher Varṇas, especially the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas should organise their way of life. That is why the education of the Śūdras did not come to their purview. The Vaiśyas, although they belonged to the category of the twice-born, also received lesser attention of the law-makers, so far as their education was concerned. It was due to the fact that the Vaiśyas had to maintain close professional contacts with the Śūdras, and this contamination told upon adversely on their caste status. Though they were not entirely deprived of the Vedic knowledge,[2] it was prescribed that trade, cattle-rearing and agriculture should be their means of livelihood, and as such Manu says that a Vaiśya should learn cattle-rearing, know the prices of jewels, coral and pearls, of metal and clothes, of perfumes and salt, know the art

[1]Farrington, op. cit., p. 105.
[2]*Manu*, X.79.

of sowing the seeds and have knowledge about the merits and defects of soil, measures and weights, qualities of goods, profit and loss, rates of payment, markets and so on.[1] Yājñavalkya refers to the system of apprenticeship under master artisans to learn several crafts.[2] This training was in some cases open to the Śūdras also. Like the Brahmacārī in the field of higher education, and apprentice was to find out a teacher and had to stay with him for a few years offering free service. The teacher was to give food and lodging to the apprentice. This custom survives even today in a very wide scale in different parts of the country. The training begins with a formal initiation in which the apprentice has to take oath that he will remain loyal to his teacher (*Ostād*, master-craftsman) throughout his life.

The education of the Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas was of a different category. As to the education of the Kṣatriyas in general we have hardly any direction in the Dharmaśāstra works. It is only about the education of the princes that the rules are laid down. According to Gautama[3] the prince should have sufficient knowledge in the Vedas and in Ānvikṣikī, i.e. metaphysics. To these Manu[4] and Yājñavalkya[5] add that he should also be proficient in Daṇḍanīti (the art of government and statecraft) and in Vārtā (economic life and production of wealth). Kauṭilya also recommends these four subjects of study and says that, after the *caula* is performed, the prince should learn the alphabet and arithmetic, and when Upanayana is performed he should learn the aforesaid four subjects of study. In the first part of the day he should learn riding on elephant, horse and chariot and also the use of arms, while in the latter part of the day he should engage himself in learning the sciences. It appears that the study of the Vedas and other general sciences was prescribed both for the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas. In addition, there was professional training. In the case of the Brāhmaṇas it was detailed study in scriptures and in the art of priesthood, while in the case of the Kṣatriyas it was training in arms and in administrative affairs. In the Upaniṣads we come across a host of Kṣatriya kings imparting knowledge of *Brahman* even to the Brāhmaṇas. The terms Ācāryā and Upādhyāyā denoted female teachers[6] which proves that when the

[1]IX.328-32. [2]II.84. [3]XI.3.
[4]VII.43. [5]I.311.
[6]Kāśikā on Pāṇini, III.3.21; IV.1.59.

grip of patriarchy was not so strong women had not only the right of receiving education but also they could function as teachers. Viśvavārā, Apālā and Ghoṣā are said to have been the composers respectively of *Ṛgveda*, V.28, VIII.91 and X.39. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[1] refers to Maitreyī and Gārgī as women of great learning. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasutra*[2] while dealing with daily Ṛṣi-tarpana (remembering of ancient sages) says that water should be offered in memory of three great women of learning, namely, Gārgī Vācaknavī, Vaḍavā Prātitheyī and Sulabhā Maitreyī. But the privilege the women enjoyed was only for a short time. In the Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis women were assigned a position of dependence and they came to be looked upon as Śūdras[3] unworthy of receiving education.

The study of the Veda in the professional sense meant the study of the Mantra and the Brāhmaṇa portion of a particular branch.[4] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[5] enumerates under Svādhyāya (subjects of study) Ṛks, Yajus-formulae, Sāmans, Atharvāṅgirasaḥ, Itihāsa-purāṇa and Gāthā-nārāśāṃsīs. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* refers to the study of the Kalpa, Rahasya (secret doctrines), Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, Itihāsa, Anvākhyāna, Purāṇa, Anuśāsana, etc. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[6] the following subjects of study are enumerated: the four Vedas, Itihāsa-purāṇa, grammar, Pitraya (treatise on Śrāddha), Rāśi (arithmetic), Daiva (portents), Nidhi (science of hidden treasures), Vākovākya (dialectics), Ekāyana (politics), Devavidyā (knowledge about gods: Nirukta), Brahmavidyā (in the sense of metres and phonetics), Bhūtavidyā (physical science), Kṣatravidyā (art of warfare), Nakṣatravidyā (astronomy), Sarpavidyā (snake charms), and Devajanavidyā (arts like dancing, singing, preparing unguents, etc.). Most of these subjects are retained in the Dharmaśāstras or Smṛtis which often add the four Upavedas, namely, Āyurveda (science of healing), Dhanurveda (the science of archery), Gandharvaveda (fine arts in the forms of dancing, singing, painting, etc.) and Arthaśāstra (political economy).

Instruction was entirely oral. The teacher sat in front of the

[1] II.4.1; III.6; III.8.
[2] III.4
[3] *Vasiṣṭha DS*, VI.1; *Baudh. DS*, II.2.45; *Gautama*, XVIII.1; *Manu*, IX.3.
[4] Śabara on *Jaimini*, II.1.33.
[5] XI.5.7.4-8.
[6] II.10.

student and recited verses clearly and slowly and then the student having understood the particulars of intonations joined him in the recitation.[1] Manu prescribes certain rules: The student should sip water, face the north, fold both hands together and wear light clothes. He should clasp the feet of the teacher at the beginning and end of the study.[2] In the Vidyāsūkta quoted in the *Nirukta*[3] it is stated that learning should be imparted to one who is pure, attentive, intelligent and endowed with Brahmacarya (in the sense of celibacy), who will never prove false to his teacher and who will guard what he learns as a treasure. Manu[4] says that ten persons deserve to be taught, *viz.* one who is the son of the teacher, one who gives service to the teacher, one who gives some knowledge in exchange, one who knows dharma or one who is pure in body and mind, one who is truthful, one who is able to understand, one who gives money, one who is well-disposed and one who is a relative of the teacher.

We have seen that from the ancient times the student had to serve the teacher by tending his cattle, had to beg food and announce it to the teacher and to look after his sacred fires.[5] He should have either to shave his entire head, or allow all the hair to grow as matted or keep only a tuft of hair at the centre and shave the rest.[6] One of the rules for the student was that he should not pronounce the name of his teacher without prefixing or affixing an honorofic address. The teacher is to be saluted properly. When the salutation consists in clasping the feet of the teacher along with the utterance of one's name and *gotra* (clan-name), it is known as Upasaṃgrahaṇa. In Abhivādana salutation there is no clasping of the feet. It is of three kinds—Nitya (obligatory, to be done everyday), Naimittika (to be done only on certain occasions) and Kāmya (to be done only if a person has certain rewards in view). It appears from certain passages of the Upaniṣads that the usual duration of Brahmacarya or studenthood was twelve years,[7] but a long period of Brahmacarya was not unknown. The student remaining with his teacher till his

[1]VII.1.2.
[2]cf. *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, IV.8.
[3]*Manu*, II.70-74.
[4]II.4. [5]II.109, II.112.
[6]cf. *Chāndogya*, IV.3.5; IV.4.5.
[7]*Āpastamba DS*, I.1.2.31-32; *Vasiṣṭha*, VII.11; *Manu*, II.219.
[8]cf. *Chāndogya*, IV.10.1.

death was known as Naiṣṭhika Brahmacārī or perpetual student. If the teacher dies he may stay with and serve the teacher's son if he is worthy or his teacher's wife or he may worship the fire kindled by his deceased teacher. He has to perform throughout his life the duties of offering fuel-sticks, Veda-study, begging for food, sleeping on the ground and of self-restraint.[1]

According to the *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra*,[2] which is echoed in other legal texts also, after the student was instructed in the sacred Gāyatrī, four Veda-Vratas or Vedic observances were to be performed by the students. These were known as Śukriya, Śākvara, Vrātika and Aupaniṣada. These were of mini-Upanayana types. Then, there was Anadhyāya or occasional holidays. Under special conditions the study of the Vedas was prohibited. The rules relating to the conduct of the student are too numerous to be set out in detail. We have already had the occasion to refer to some of them. The student should not look at the sun and should avoid honey, flesh, perfumes, garlands, sleeping by day, rubbing oil on body, putting collyrium in eyes, going in a cart, wearing shoes and holding an umbrella, love affairs, anger, covetousness, infatuation, worthless and proud discussions, playing on musical instruments, luxurious baths with hot water, making the teeth attractively clean, ecstatic state of mind, dancing, singing, gazing at women or touching young women, gambling, serving a low person, injury to animals, obscene talk, drinking of wine, and so on.[3]

Sexual taboos are prescribed in details. Not only he should avoid gazing at a woman or touching her, but according to the direction of Manu,[4] he should observe complete celibacy, and if he suffers from night-emissions, he should bathe, worship the sun and make penance with specific *mantras*. The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*[5] not only prohibits for him sexual intercourse, but ordains that he should speak with woman only as much as is absolutely necessary. Gautama[6] says that the student should not assist the wives of his teacher in

[1] *Āpastamba, DS*, I.1.4.29; *Manu*, II.243ff; Bṛhaspati quoted in *Smṛticandrikā*, I, p. 62.

[2] II.11-12.

[3] *Manu*, II; *Yājñavalkya*, I.33.

[4] II.180-81, 198.

[5] I.1.2.26.

[6] II.31-32; cf. *Manu*, II,111; *Baudh, DS*, I.2.37.

their toilet or bath, nor wash their feet nor shampoo them. Married woman as a rule deserve honour from the student according to the age of their husbands. A student who is full twenty years old shall not honour the young wife of a teacher by clasping her feet.[1]

After finishing the entire course of study, the student should return to his own house. This was done after performing a rite called Samāvartana which literally means 'return from the teacher's house to one's home.' A ceremonial bath (*Snāna*) was the main feature of the rite and that is why a student who was supposed to have completed his course of study and taken the ceremonial bath was known as a Snātaka. A Snātaka is said to be of three kinds—Vidyā-Snātaka (one who has finished Veda study but has not gone through the prescribed observances), Vrātā-Snātaka (one who has observed all rituals but has not finished Veda study) and Vidyā-Vrātā-Snātaka (one who has completed both). Elaborate procedure of Samāvartana is found in the Gṛhyasūtras.[2] The student who is about to return home, should collect eleven costly articles for the teacher and for himself. He should place a fuel-stick on high, and having made gifts of food and of a cow to the Brāhmaṇas, he should perform the actions prescribed in the Godāna ceremony, i.e. shaving the head and also the hair on the other parts of the body. Then having taken a ceremonial bath, he should put on new garments. Then he should anoint a part of his body with a specially prepared ointment. In the case of the Brāhmaṇa it is to be given on the face, in that of a Kṣatriya on the arms, in that of a Vaiśya on the belly and in that of a woman on her genital organ. He should utter various sorts of mantras, and then, fully dressed with shoes, umbrella, jewel, turban and a bamboo staff, offer *samidh* to the fire and invoke deities to protect him and to render his knowledge fruitful.[3] The *Pāraskara Gṛhyasutra*[4] prescribes that eight jars full of water are to be placed on the Kuśa grass and water therefrom is to be poured over the head and the body of the student with certain *mantras*. The *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra*[5] says that at the end of the rite the student should ride a chariot drawn by oxen, drive some distance in an eastern or northern direction, and

[1] *Manu*, II.212.
[2] The elaborate procedure is given in the *Hiraṇyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra*, I.9-13.
[3] *Āśvalāyana GS*, III.8-9.
[4] II.6.
[5] III.4.31-34.

then come back to the teacher who honours him with *madhuparka*. The *Hiraṇyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra*[1] says that the girdle, the staff and the black antelope skin which he wore during his Brahmacarya should be thrown into water.

Numerous rules are laid down about the conduct of a Snātaka, many of which are applicable also to the students and householders. Some of these rules have already been mentioned. Manu[2] says that a Dvija, being permitted by his teacher, may take the ceremonial bath and return from his teacher's house, and then marry a girl. Samāvartana is a precondition of marriage no doubt, but is not necessarily an essential precondition. After Samāvartana a person is called a Snātaka and after marriage a Gṛhastha. In modern times Samāvartana often takes place a short time after Upanayana.

[1] I.9.10.
[2] III.4.

9

RELIGIOUS INITIATIONS

Three types of initiation are generally observed in tribal puberty rites which are concerned with sex life, student life and religious life respectively. In the case of Upanayana, as we have seen above, the first type operates negatively and the second positively. In addition to these, Upanayana is also an initiation into religious life. After Upanayana the boy, as a rule, has to sit for the Sandhyā-Upāsanā or daily prayer at least twice a day.[1] The morning prayer is to be done before sunrise and should be carried on till the disc of the sun is seen, while the evening prayer is to be done when the sun is about to set. Recital of the sacred Gāyatrī verse and other *mantras* is the principal thing in Sandhyā. Other constituents are *ācamana* (sipping of water), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), *mārjana* (sprinkling himself with water to the accompaniment of several *mantras*), *aghamarṣana* (driving out sin by taking water in the right hand formed in the shape of a cow's ear, holding it near the nose and breathing out from the nose on the water), *argha* (offering of water to the sun) and *upasthāna* (reciting mantras by way of worship of the sun in the morning and generally of Varuṇa in the evening). The education the initiate receives is also of religious character.

In other parts of the world puberty rites likewise serve the purpose of religious initiation. Two forms of initiation are current among the followers of the Zoroastian faith. The first form called *Naojot* is intended for common people, while the second form includes two ceremonies, *Nāvar* and *Marātib*, through which initiation into priesthood is attained.[2] The lowest age for the initiation called *Naojot* is

[1] *Āpastamba DS*, I.11.30.8: *Āśvl. GS*, III.7; *Manu*, II.161.
[2] A.V.W. Jackson, *Persia: Past and Present*, New York, 1906, pp. 380ff.

seven while the highest is fifteen.[1] In the Pahlavi texts it is explicitly stated: "By a man and woman, until fifteen years of age, there is no committal of the sin of running about uncovered; and the sin of unreasonable chatter arises after fifteen years of age[2]. . . . Of unseasonable chatter that of children of five years of age has no root. . . . And from eight years till they are man and woman of fifteen years". . . .[3] It therefore appears that in Iran the age of maturity was fifteen in the case of both the sexes. The highest age limit of the initiation into religious life is also fifteen. We have already referred to the Iranian custom of wearing *Kusti* or sacred thread which is analogous to the Yajñopavīta of the Brāhmaṇas. Among the Jews, circumcision was practised as a rite of puberty. It was also a feature of religious initiation which was borrowed by the Muhammedans. The origin of this rite is indicated in a story of the old Testament.[4] Kenneth observed that it was performed at all events normally, not in infancy but in adolescence or manhood.[5] Philo of Alexandria in his *Questiones in Genisin* declares that it is not proper to divulge the sacred mysteries to the uninitiated before they have been purified by certain rites. In Greece, none but the initiated was admitted to the Eleusinian mysteries and the rituals of Dionysos.

One of the leading features of Jainism is that there is a close union between the laymen and the monks in matters of religious life. This is proved by the similarity of their religious duties which differ not in kind but in degree. This has enabled Jainism to avoid fundamental changes within. The followers of Jainism have to undergo initiatory rites at puberty. Many of their rites, as we have remarked above, resemble those of the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists, since all these have been inherited from the tribal rites practised from time immemorial. The Jain Sañgha, like that of the Buddhists, was modelled after the surviving tribal organisations of the sixth century BC. The head of the Jain Sañgha was called *Gaṇadhara*, 'one who holds the tribe,' i.e. tribal chief. The order of the monks is recruited chiefly from novices entering it at puberty. A monk entering the

[1]cf. *Vendidād*, XV.45; XVIII.34-59.
[2]*Shāyast la-Shāyast*, IV.10.
[3]ibid, V.1-2.
[4]*Exodus*, VI.24-26.
[5]*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, p. 441.

order takes the five great vows (*vratas*) which were originally nothing but close adherence to some strictly tribal values which were trampled and undermined in reality during the time of Buddha and Mahāvīra. Instructions and taboos for the novices are furnished in details in the Jain Sūtras,[1] and they are surprisingly similar to those found among the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists. The initiation of the monks generally takes place under a banian tree. As ascetic can only retain five garments (three upper and two lower ones), the colour of which vary according to his sect. The next step in the initiation is the removal of hair, after which a mixture called *Vāsa-kṣepa* is applied to the man's head. Then sacred *mantras* are whispered in his ear. If he belongs to the Digambara sect, he must have to take an entirely new name. If a Śvetambara, he might either change his name or add a new one to his old one. But a Sthānakavāsī retains his original name intact. The rules for the initiation of nuns are also the same.[2]

Admission to the Buddhist Order (*Saṅgha*) is gained by two forms of initiation, *Pravrajyā* (Pali *Pabbajjā*) and *Upasampadā*. The former means 'going out' from one state of life to another. This ceremony is in a certain way analogous to the Brāhmaṇical initiation, by virture of which a layman is admitted to the order, and is henceforth obliged to live with a preceptor. The lowest age limit is eight. The initiated one begins his life as a *Pravrajita* (*Pabbajita*) or a homeless one, and is called a *Śrāmaṇera* (*Sāmanera*), that is a 'novice.' The period of novitiate generally lasts for twelve years. The *Upasampadā* may be conferred on all those who have previously been admitted to *Pravrajyā*.[3] The difference between these two modes of initiation becomes quite clear on account of the fact that twenty years is the lowest age at which a man is qualified for *Upasampadā*, and it follows that a boy who has become a *Śrāmaṇera* at eight, will have to wait twelve years before he can receive *Upasampadā*.[4] But this rule was not hard and fast. It appears that the disciples of

[1]*Uttarādhyayana*, I.1-48; *Sūyagaḍa*, II.2; etc.

[2]For details see N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Jain Philosophy: Historical Outline*, New Delhi, 1976.

[3]The circumstances disqualifying persons for admission and ordination are minutely expounded in *Mahāvagga*, I.29-76.

[4]S. Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, London, 1860, pp. 45ff.

Buddha were allowed to confer *Pravrajyā* and *Upasampadā* simultaneously on candidates. Even in the days of Aśoka, the lay devotee Bhaṇḍuka received *Pravrajyā* and *Upasampadā* simultaneously.[1] It seems that in the earlier phases of Buddhism initiation was given at puberty, and later, probably, on account of Brahmanical influence, the lowest age limit was fixed in the eighth year of the boy. This assumption can be substantiated by the fact that in one of his discourses the Buddha expressly forbids to confer *Pravrajyā* on a boy under fifteen years of age.[2]

In Tibet a *Srāmaṇera* can receive a so-called second initiation in the sixteenth years. The rite of *Pravrajyā* generally takes place at the eighth or twelfth year of the boy while the age of his highest initiation is strictly restricted to sixteen. The privilege of initiation is denied to those boys whose parents follow irreligious trades. The initiated one has to shave his hairs and wear the monastic robe. It is interesting to note that the highest initiation is strictly confined only to those who are of exceptional intellectual calibre.[3] In China, among the Buddhists, the ceremony of hair-shaving is performed usually at the age of sixteen. Such "Pagan accrascences" in the language of Kern, are due to the influence of local initiatory rites.[4] The *Śrāmaṇeras*, male as well as female, might undergo some sort of specialization, if they desired.[5] They are to learn ten *Śikṣāpadas*.[6] The rule now followed in Ceylon[7] is exactly the counterpart of the Brāhmaṇical Upanayana.[8] The rite of *Pravrajyā* is very simple. The boy desirous to be initiated will at first choose a Vihāra and approach the elder. He has to shave his hairs, wear the yellow robe and make a declaration of the *Triśaraṇa* or three refuges. "I take refuge with the Buddha. I take refuge with the religion; I take refuge with the order." Then the teacher will impart the *Daśa-Śikṣāpadāni* or ten precepts.

[1] *Dīpavaṃsa*, XII.62f.

[2] *Mahāvagga*, I.50.

[3] L.A. Waddell, *Buddhism in Tibet*, London, 1885, pp. 137ff.

[4] H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, Strassburg, 1888, p. 78n; S. Hardy, op. cit., pp. 45ff.

[5] *Sutta-vibhaṅga*, II.139.

[6] *Mahāvagga*, I.56.

[7] Hardy, op. cit., p. 23.

[8] Kern, op. cit., p. 78.

In Nepal, the initiation is called *Abhiṣeka*, and this is more magical than religious in character. The teacher in charge of the candidate prepares a pot (*Kalasa*) full of water and puts into it a lotus made of gold; five brands of sweetmeats, five drugs, five flowers and threads of five colours are provided. On the first day the student has to sit on *Vajrāsana* and recite the three refuges. On the second day, the teacher gives three protections; The first is *Vajrarakṣā* which the teacher provides him by placing a *Vajra* (symbolized by a flower) on the head. The second is *Loharakṣā* or protection from iron or by iron which is performed by placing three iron padlocks on the belly and shoulder of the boy. The third is *Agnirakṣā* or protection from fire, and this is performed by placing a wine-pot on the head. Then is performed *Kalasa-abhiṣeka* which is sprinkling of holy water from a Kalasa or vessel. Then comes the head priest and gives a silver ring to the boy. On the third day the boy's hairs are shaved and then he is favoured with the *Triratna* and the ten precepts.[1]

The Buddhist and Jain Saṅghas were modelled on tribal organisation. Every member of the Saṅgha had equal rights, and the state of affairs was managed in a purely democratic way. There was no such thing in the Saṅgha as private property. Referring to the monks of the modern Jain Saṅghas, Mrs. Stevenson made this interesting comment:

> He is now to be a homeless wanderer, possessing nothing and dependent for his very subsistence on the alms of the charitable. He may possess no metal of any sort: even a needle, if borrowed, must be returned at sunset, and his spectacles, if he wears them, should be framed in wood.[2]

This also holds good in the case of the Buddhists. From literary evidence it is clear that the functioning of the earlier Buddhist Saṅghas was guided by the tribal principles of equality and democracy and the absence of private property.[3] These questions, however, do not concern us at present. Here we are only to see how

[1]B.H. Hodgson, *Religion and Literature of the Nepalese Buddhists*, London, 1874, pp. xv, 212.

[2]S. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, 1915, rep. New Delhi, 1970, p. 226.

[3]R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, 3rd. ed., Calcutta, 1969, pp. 271ff.

thoroughly did the Buddha imitate the tribal model in laying down the principles of initiation, i.e. the procedure of entry into the order.

We have seen that in tribal society one's initiation as a full member of the tribe is preceded by a puberty rite, the essence of which is the simulation of death and rebirth, departure from one life and coming into another. These ideas find expression in the Buddhist concepts of *Pravrajyā* (going out) and *Upasampadā* (arrival). The former is 'going out' from the worldly life, marked by tribal custom of shaving the head and other minor features like changing into the yellow robe and so on. But more important is *Upasampadā* which is an elaborate method of obtaining the sanction of all the full-fledged members of the Saṅgha for getting the candidate admitted into it.

In tribal society such sanction is given by the elders. Being essentially a kinship organisation, the claim to the tribal membership is determined by descent. But since the Buddhist Saṅgha was not a kinship organisation, the procedure of admission into the Saṅgha must follow a slightly different method. And in this case the method followed by the Buddha was nothing but what is known as *tribal adoption*. The tribes often grant membership to persons who are not their natural kinsmen. How this adoption takes place may be illustrated with reference to the adoption of Morgan by the Hawk clan of the Seneca tribe[1]:

> After the people had assembled at the council house one of the chiefs made a address giving some account of the person, the reason for his adoption, the name and gens of the person adopting, and the name bestowed upon the novitiate. Two chiefs taking the person by the arms then marched with him through the council house and back, chanting the song of adoption. To this the people responded in musical chorus at the end of each verse. The march continued until the verses were ended, which required three rounds. With this the ceremony concluded.[2]

The ritual of the tribal adoption is expected to throw some light on the *Upasampadā* ceremony as found in the *Mahāvagga*.[3] The

[1] D.P. Chattopadhyada, *Lokāyata*, Delhi, 1959, p. 478.
[2] L.H. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, New York, 1877, pp. 80-81.
[3] I.28; I.76; etc.

Upājjhāya (Upādhyāya) from whom the new convert received ordination played the most important part in this system. He must be a learned Bhikkhu who has completed ten years since his own *Upasampadā*. The candidate should formally request him to confer upon him the Upasampadā ordination. He must be possessed of certain standard of education and moral practices. Then it must be ascertained by formal questioning in the assembly of the Bhikkhus whether he is free from all disqualifications. The Upādhyāya should present him in the assembly. The elders being satisfied with his qualifications will ask whether he is afflicted with such diseases as leprosy, boils, dry leprosy, consumption and fits, whether he is a freeman, whether he has any debt, whether he is in royal service, whether his parents have given consent, whether his age is really twenty years, and so on. After satisfactory answers are received, a learned competent Bhikkhu will proclaim the following *ñatti* (announcement) before the assembly:

> Let the Saṅgha, reverend Sirs, hear me. This person N.N. desires to receive the *Upasampadā* ordination from the venerable N.N. He is free from the disqualifications. His alms-bowl and robes are in due state. N.N. asks the Saṅgha for the *Upasampadā* ordination with N.N. as Upājjhāya. If the Saṅgha is ready, let the Saṅgha confer on N.N. the *Upasampadā* ordination with N.N. as Upājjhāya.
> Let the Saṅgha reverend sirs, hear me. This person N.N. desires to receive the *Upasampadā* ordination from the venerable N.N. The Sangha confers on N.N. the *Upasampadā* ordination of N.N. with N.N. as Upājjhāya. Let any one of the venerable brethren who is in favour of the *Upasampadā* ordination of N.N. with N.N. as Upājjāya. be silent, and any one who is not in favour of it, speak.
> And for the second time I thus speak to you: Let the Saṅgha (etc. as before).
> And for the third time I thus speak to you: Let the Saṅgha (etc. as before).
> N.N. has received *Upasampadā* ordination from the Saṅgha with N.N. as Upājjhāya. The Saṅgha is in favour of it, therefore it is silent. Thus I understand.[1]

Many features of Tantric initiation are in common with tribal puberty rites, because Tantra as a very complicated religious phenomenon and method of spiritual exercise contains a lot of

[1] *Sacred Books of the East*, XIII, pp. 169-70.

primitive elements. The special rites of the *Pañca-tattva* or *Pañca-makāra*, the Five M-s, that is Madya or wine. Māṃsa or meat, Maithuna or sexual intercourse, Mudrā or cereal or woman or bodily poses and Matsya or fish are evidently relics and transformations of primitive tribal practices. Tantric texts and digests derive the word Dikṣā from the root *dā* (to give) and *kṣi* (to destroy). Thus *Dīkṣa*, according to the Tantras, confers divine knowledge and destroys sin.[1] The *Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa*[2] conveys the idea that *Dīksā* symbolizes a new birth for the sacrificer. The *Kulārṇava* says that there is no *Siddhi* nor *Mokṣa* for him who has not had Dikṣā. Therefore a man should by all means receive *Dīkṣā* from a Guru. Once initiated, the distinction based on caste vanishes, both Śūdra and Brāhmaṇa become alike.[3] The Guru holds a mouthful of water in his own mouth and passes it to the mouth of the disciple that accepts the *mantra* while he gulps down the water.[4] Most works on Tantra provide that the knowledge conveyed by the Guru must be kept secret.[5] One should not fail to recall in this connection that in tribal initiation, the whole ceremony is secret, and when the novice returns to the settlement he is strictly forbidden to reveal what he has heard or seen. The same holds good in the case of Tantric *Dīkṣā*. Just as a man is expected to keep secret the illicit love affair of his mother (*mātṛjāra*), so also the initiated one is expected not to disclose anything about what he has seen or learnt during his initiation.

Dīkṣā in the left-handed way or Vāmācāra is known as *Abhiṣeka*. It is stated that there are two *ācāras* or ways, left and right. A man belongs to the right-handed way by virtue of his birth. It is only by *Abhiṣeka* that he is initiated into the left-handed way, i.e. the way which requires the rituals of the five Ma-Kāras.[6] The *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*[7] says that a person does not become a Kaula by merely drinking wine, but he becomes so only after *Abhiṣeka*. The candidate, afer a ceremonial bath performs a rite for the removal of his

[1] *Śāradatilaka*, IV.2; *Kulārṇava*, XVII.51.
[2] III.1.2.10-21; III.1.3.7-28.
[3] XIV.91. 97.
[4] *Pārānandasūtra*, 12-16.
[5] cf. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, I.12.
[6] *Vāmakeśvara-tantra*, LI, quoted in N.N. Vasu's *Viśvakoṣa*, in Bengali, VII, p. 513.
[7] X.112ff.

sins and other purifications. Then the Guru draws a *Sarvatobhadra-maṇḍala*, a Tantric diagram, on the altar, sanctifies the five *tattvas* (the five *Ma-Kāras*), places an auspicious jar and fills it with wine or holy water. The principal part consists in the Guru's sprinkling with water the disciple to the accompaniment of 21 *mantras* invoking different deities. The initiated one is now considered has having a new birth and the Guru gives him a new name.[1] The *Jñānārṇava*[2] provides that at the time of initiation the Guru has to instruct the disciple or novice as regards the functioning of the six *cakras* within the body, together with the number of petals in each, the colour of each and the letters of alphabet assigned to each.

It is not difficult to find out the primitive basis of the Tantric rites of the five Ma-Kāras, the initiation into which recalls that into tribal mysteries which was generally given to boys and girls on their attainment of puberty in olden times, relics of which are still found among many backward peoples. The *Kaulāvalinirṇaya* says that, of all the five M-s, *Maithuna* or sexual intercourse is the most important because this alone helps the aspirant to achieve his end. The performance of the sexual act should follow a ritual process involving *nyāsa*, *mantras*, etc., and the semen should be discharged with the utterance of a prescribed formula. A reverse process can also be practised by giving the semen an upward motion so that it reaches the highest cerebral point. Such arresting the flow of semen is variously known as *Vajroli*, *Sahajoli*, *Amaroli*, etc. The aforesaid text refers to *Cakrapūjā* in which an equal number of men and women should secretly meet at night in a circle (*Cakra*) and selecting partners from among themselves, indulge in sexual acts in front of a *Yantra* or mystic diagram representing the Mother Goddess.[3] Such practices are still current in many parts of India, e.g. Lājadharma, popular among some groups of Rajasthan, or Colimārga practices of the Himalayan region. These are evidently relics of primitive fertility rites connected with agricultural life in which promiscuous sexual union was a special feature which had also exerted a great influence upon the puberty rites of the ancients.

The word Upanayana as we have seen above, literally means 'the drawing near or leading forth [of a boy for study under the teacher].'

[1] cf. *Tantrarājatantra*, II.58-72.
[2] XXIV.45-53.
[3] *Kaulāvalinirṇaya*, IV.10; VIII.56ff.

The prefix *Upa* is significant. It denotes something "secret" and has often some bearing on matters sexual. Many words beginning with *Upa* are found in Sanskrit having both the senses contained in them. It appears that the present grammatical derivation of the word Upanayana is based upon the changed significance of the original rite which had some esoteric elements. The same principle applies to the term Guhyasamāja. There is a text called *Guhyasamāja* belonging to the Tantric Buddhists. The word Guhyasamāja means 'secret society' which recalls the tribal secret societies meant for initiation. Historically it was quite likely that many of the earlier followers of Tantrism embraced Buddhism owing to the magnificent personality of the Buddha or inspired by his teachings. But they could not and did not give up their special Tantric doctrines and practices. Within the Saṅgha these peoples created secret societies for continuing their Tantric practices. They also composed their scripture which they named after their secret society and got their theories and practices sanctioned by words attributed to the Buddha.

In the *Guhyasamāja* and other texts of Tantric Buddhism sexual union as a means of spiritual realisation is prescribed. The Buddhist texts use the term Mudrā or Mahāmudrā to denote a woman, equated with Prajñā or knowledge, acting as sexual companion of the aspirant in his spiritual quest of non-duality. The *Guhyasamāja* while describing the different ceremonies in connection with initiation mentions *Prajñābhiṣeka* or initiation of the disciple with Prajñā as Śakti.[1] The preceptor takes the hand of a Vidyā or Śakti, a beautiful woman, and placing it on the hand of the disciple says that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, the Vidyā should be accepted and never abandoned in life. One striking feature of this *Prajñābhiṣeka* which reminds us of the tribal puberty rites is that it is a frank initiation into sexual life. In the case of the Brāhmaṇical initiation, i.e. Upanayana, initiation into sex life functions negatively in the form of sexual taboos, but in the case of Tantric initiation we have the continuity of the earlier tradition.

Mudrā, which denotes woman in the Buddhist Tantras, stands for cereals in the non-Buddhist ones, and this probably signifies the earlier association of women with features of agricultural life and rituals. Everywhere in the world fish was also regarded as the agent of ferti-

[1] *Guhyasamāja*, ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *GOS*, p. 161.

lity and appeared as symbol of the Mother Goddess.[1] In the Tantras wine (*madya* or *surā*) is equated with Śakti and meat with Śiva and their consumer is regarded as the Bhairava himself. Whether or not this recalls the Christian concept of transubstantiation, the fact remains that such ideas are very primitive, connected with totemistic beliefs according to which the flesh of the clan totem, often conceived as a god, has the magical power to create rejuvenation in those who consume it. The ritual use of wine is likewise a very primitive practice originally connected with fertility magic. William Crooke has shown that the idea that liquor is the vehicle of magical power lies at the root of tribal rituals all over India, and cited numerous examples of its use for ensuring the fertility of the fields.[2] Wine has a two-fold significance, one for the purpose of overcoming death and the other designed to ensure birth. That wine overcomes the contamination of death (cf. the *Ṛgveda* passage: We have drunk Soma and become immortal) is evidenced from the funeral rites among the backward peoples in different parts at the world. One of the commonest name for locally made wine in India is *nṛtasañjivanī*, 'that which restores life.' The same belief probably explains the use of wine in the puberty rites, in as much as they reflect the idea of death and rebirth. Wine also plays an important part in marriage rituals all over the world as an agent of procreation.[3]

[1]see. N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Mother Goddess*, second edition, New Delhi, 1977.

[2]W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore in Northern India*, Oxford, 1926, pp. 100ff.

[3]*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, V, pp. 79-80.

10

THE IDEA OF REBIRTH

The decay and regeneration in nature must have inspired a number of rites to be performed at puberty, the period of transition from one grade of life to another, in order to obtain a fresh outpouring of life and power. We have seen that the rites regarded as the qualification for admission into the adult group are connected with the concept of *dvijatva* or rebirth. This idea of rebirth, which also characterizes the death rites, owes its origin to the observation of plant life, its death and revival, and is linked up with primitive beliefs connected with natural and human fertility to which, as we have already pointed out, the origin of menstrual and sexual rites and other kindred features, associated with agricultural life, should also be traced. The idea of death and rebirth in every turning point of an individual's life evidently contributed to the concepts of *Karma*, transmigration of souls, metempsychosis and so on. How thoroughly such fertility beliefs and rituals and the ideas originating from them worked out in the lives of the Indian masses and how immense was their contribution to the development and shaping of the most complex and sophisticated aspects of Indian thought, as revealed in religious, philosophical and ethical doctrines of the later period, will be discussed in the present chapter.

Robertson Smith has shown that in the primitive religion it is ritual that generates and sustains myth. On the basis of the Semitic studies he points out that a comprehension of Hebrew ritual is essential to the understanding of Hebrew mythology.[1] In fact, divinities are born of ritual, as is correctly held by Jane Harrison. "The May-pole or harvest sheaf is half a way to a harvest-maiden; it is thus that a goddess is made. A song is sung, a story told and the

[1]W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semitics*, London, 1899, p. 17.

very telling fixes the outline of the personality."[1] The rites of the annual decay and revival of plant life, current in olden days undoubtedly gave rise to the myths of Orisis and Isis in Egypt, Attis and Cybele in Phrygia, Tammuj and Ishtar in Syria and Babylon, and Adonis and Aphrodite in Cyprus and Greece. According to the existing myths, these gods would die every year, causing the goddess to mourn, and would then be brought back to life once again. The Egyptian Isis was originally a Corn Mother who was not only the creatress of the fresh verdure of vegetation that covered the earth, but the green-field itself, personified as a goddess. Cybele, the Phrygian Mother of the Gods was also a Corn Mother. The union of Cybele and Attis, like that of Aphrodite and Adonis, or Ishtar and Tammuj, was marked by sex festivals. The union of Demeter and Zeus was also imitated by men and women in the sex festivals at Eleusis in order to make the fields wave with yellow corns. The gods likewise were the personification of corns, the sons and mortal consorts of the goddesses, and the theme of their annual death and revival symbolized the annual facts of plant life in relation to the field.

This 'dying god and mourning goddess' theme was in some places imitated by a violent ritual in which the king or the priest (very often the same person) who impersonated the dying god had to be killed. His tenure of office was limited in early times to a prescribed period at the end of which he was put to death. In a series of ritual acts he had to make sexual intercourse with the priestess or goddess-queen, mark out the soil for distribution among the clans, turn the first sod with his sacred hoe, cut the first ear of corn with his sacred sickle and finally, at harvest he was put to death, to be replaced at the new year by a successor of unimpaired vitality[2] According to Thomson,

[1]J.E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1908, pp. 64, 187, 304.

[2]For details see J.G. Frazer, *The Dying God* (*The Golden Bough*, pt. III). The views of Frazer have been challenged by subsequent writers and it is a fact that in many cases his interpretations are not really valid. Still he can not be ignored. Even a strong critic of Frazer's work E.R. Leach says: "If it is the facts themselves that matter, not Frazer's interpretation of the facts . . . . the assembled facts remain a challenge to analysis." 'Golden Bough or Gilded Twig?' in *Daedalus*, Vol. 90, pp. 381-82.

this killing of king or the priest was an invariable incident in the women's ritual cycle.

> It was necessary for the queens to conceive, in order that the earth might bear fruit. Their sexual life was a cycle of mimetic magic. Accordingly, the procreation was imagined as a god in the first instance, no doubt, the god of the moon, which in primitive thought is the cause of pregnancy in woman and fertility in the soil and after serving their purpose the men whom this god was embodied were put to death. They had to die in order that the crops might live. This ritual, which inspired the myths of Ishtar and Tammuj, Isis and Osiris, Venus and Adonis, is the precursor of the Greek sacred marriage, in which it was adopted to the conditions of monogamy.[1]

It should not, however, be expected that in the historical period when the class division was fully established and a feudal system developed out of it, kings or priests would dedicate their physical bodies in this way. Still there are a few instances in which we come across the existence of certain customs reflecting the beliefs centering round the 'dying god.' Duarte Barbosa who travelled in the Malabar region in the sixteenth century stated that in some places of that region the king could hold office only for twelve years and then he was put to death.[2] The kings of Calicut were also god-kings who had to commit ceremonial suicide after twelve years of kingship. Towards the end of the seventeenth century this system was slightly changed. Twelve years over, there was a big ceremony at the end of which the king was killed. He was kept surrounded by his bodyguards.

He who could break the barricade of the bodyguards and kill the king was assigned to a fresh liege of kingship for twelve years. Not only the king but the high officials as well had to undergo the same sort of ceremonial slaughter. This held good also in the case of the village headmen. For five years they had absolute power, but after that they were put to death.[3]

Analogous fertility rites of violent character are found in tribal India. For example, the Meria-killing of the Khonds was a human

[1]G. Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, I, pp. 158-59.

[2]D. Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, Eng. tr. H.E. Stanley, London, 1866, pp. 172ff.

[3]G. Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*, Madras, 1909, pp. 120ff.

sacrifice for increasing the productivity of the fields. They believe that Mother Earth bestows power of life through harvest and that power of life can be returned to her by offering a life, i.e. by a human sacrifice. Accordingly, the body of the victim was burnt and the ashes were sprinkled on the earth. This rite was also characterized by heavy consumption of wine and indiscriminate sexual intercourse.[1] In many parts of the world, as Thomson had pointed out, the victim of such rites was equated with the Moon-god who in primitive thought was the cause of pregnancy in women and fertility in the soil.[2] The Moon was not only regarded as the cause of conception and generation, but also as the regulator of the periodic function of women, the controller of menstruation and the guardian of the embryo and the placenta.[3] In the preceding chapters we have seen that in ancient Indian texts the moon is regarded as the divine guardian of a girl and he enjoys a girl when she develops the signs of puberty. In the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* the following is stated.

> From the wise Moon, who orders the seasons, consisting of fifteen parts when he is born, from the Moon who is the abode of our ancestors, the seed is derived. The *seed*, even myself, the gods gathered up into an active man, and through an active man they brought me to a mother.[4]

Since the moon is specially conceived as the source of magical powers and the cause of conception and generation, it is evident that the ideas of regeneration or rebirth and the rituals connected with them have some logical bearing on the functioning of the moon. The conception of rebirth is conspicuously associated with the moon also because of its eclipses symbolizing death and revival. That is why during the eclipse men usually follow the traditional customs which are *connected with the event of a man's death in a family*. Old utensils are given up which is followed by a ceremonial bath. The regular course of moon by itself suggests the death and revival theme. The periodical death and revival of the moon is responsible for the observances of various local rites throughout India which are mainly characterized by ceremonial bath and fasting.

[1] N.K. Bose, *Hindu Samājer Gaḍan*, in Bengali, Viśvabhāratī, pp. 71ff.
[2] G. Thomson, loc. cit.
[3] For details see N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Ancient Indian Rituals*, pp. 122-25.
[4] *Sacred Books of the East*, 1, p. 233f.

The festival of Holi is celebrated on the full-moon day of spring, while that of Dīpāvalī or Dewali on the new-moon night at the beginning of winter. Winter and spring symbolize respectively the death and revival of the year, the annual cycle of birth and death in nature. These two celebrations, one in the full moon and the other in the new moon are mutually correlated. Holi was evidently a primitive rite of death and resurrection, a funeral rite, the purpose of which was to secure a new life for the departed one. Gradually this rite developed into a wider significance and impersonal character, symbolizing the events of deaths and renovations in nature. The death of the year in winter and its revival in spring with the growth of new leaves on the trees probably served as the basis for the later conceptions culminated in the present form of this festival. One of the main features of the rituals of Holi is the miming of the act of burning a deadbody, a human figure made of different combustible articles. This ceremony is variously called in Bengal *Cāñcor, Neḍāpoḍā* (burning of a *Neḍā* or a shaven-headed monk), *Meḍāpoḍā* (burning of an Asura or demon known by the name Meṇṭā or Meḍā) etc., and in Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh it is known as *Holikādahan* and *Sammat-jvalan*. In different parts of Northern India fire festivals are held during the celebration of Holi, and the ashes thus produced from the kindling of fire are sprinkled on the ground for the multiplication of crops and fruits. Human sacrifice for enhancing the fertility of the fields, as we have noticed above, which survived till lately among the wild tribes like the Khonds, was once widely current among the peoples of India, but with the spread of relatively advanced ideas, which were evolved under different historical conditions, it went practically out of vogue. But its relics are not completely stamped out which still survive in the forms of stepping on the fire, burning of animals, burning of artificial human bodies, imitation of the act of killing, and so on.[1] Another important feature of the festival of Holi is the use of red-powder (*ābīr* or *phāg* as it is generally called) which is to be smeared on the bodies of the peoples. The symbolism of red, as that of the renewal of life has already been discussed elaborately. The third feature is sexuality. Long ago, William Crooke had pointed out that the festival of Holi was the natural outcome of the primitive sexual rites of fertility,[2] relics of which

[1] N.K. Bose, op. cit., pp. 70-77.

[2] *Folklore*, XXV, pp. 183ff.

are still found in the sexual gestures and obscene types of mock-fights, dances, songs, and jokes forming essential aspects of the festival in different parts of the country.

The full-moon nights are generally considered suitable for festive occasions like Dola-yātrā, Rāsa-yātrā, Jhulana-yātrā, Kaumudī-jāgara, i.e. the rituals of the goddess of wealth and fortune, and so on. The birth-days of the celebrated saints are often conspicuously connected with full-moon nights. While the celebrations of the full-moon are especially concerned with a new life, those with the new-moon with death and funeral aspects. The night dedicated to the god Śiva who with his followers lives in the places of cremation, surrounded by ghosts and goblins, belongs to the dark-half (*Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*). So is the ritual of Dewali which is observed on the dark new-moon night. In Bengal this ceremony is associated with the annual worship of the goddess Kālī who has always been identified with death (*mṛtyurūpā*). The main feature of the festival of Dewali is to light candles. If we seek a similar ritual we can easily find it in the pre-Christian fire festivals of Europe which were originally performed to commemorate the death of Balder. The custom of lighting candle on or around the tomb is universal. Among the Muslims and the Christians this custom is widely in vogue as also among people belonging to different sects. It is the commonest method of appealing to the man buried behind the tomb. The flame of light is the symbol of relation with the dead and the departed soul, and since this connection with death is direct, the relation of Dewali with the world of the ghosts is close. This explains why the preceding night of Dewali is called *Bhūta-caturdaśī*, the night of the ghosts, which is observed by lighting fourteen candles. The north Indian pompous celebration of Dewali has derived its main features from the Jains of Gujarat and Rajasthan. According to Bhadrabāhu's *Kalpasūtra*, as soon as the news of the death of Mahāvīra came to be known, the Mallas and the Vṛjis observed the lamp festival in honour of the departed lord.[1] It was arranged to commemorate the demise of Mahāvīra, and since then the Jains have been performing this celebration every year on the day of his *Nirvāṇa*. In this case the Jains must have followed an ancient custom which revealed an intrinsic connection between the dead and the flame of lamp. Since this connection has long been established in human mind, the

[1] *Sacred Books of the East*, XXII, p. 266.

common custom is that when a man dies and his body is taken to the burning or burial ground, a lamp has to be kept lighted at the place where he breathed his last. Likewise when the image of any god is taken away for immersion, a lamp has to be kept burning on the altar where the image was installed. Fire being the helper in every human action, the idea also developed that it was able to lead the dead into the desired region. In the Vedic age the customs of burial and burning existed side by side, and hence we are quoting a verse from the *Ṛgveda* to show precisely what the role of Agni (fire) was in this case.

> Again, O Agni, to the Fathers send him who, offered in thee, goes with our oblations. *Wearing new life* let him increase his offspring: let him *rejoin a body*, Jātavedas.[1]

Therefore, burning or reducing into ashes is not the sole function of Agni. He can animate anything by his heat, and as such he can cause rebirth. The flame of lamp or that of fire is the symbol of this rebirth or resurrection, and that is why its ritual use is found in everything connected with death. Fire festivals connected with the ideas of death and resurrection form an integral part of the Gājana and Caḍaka ceremonies dedicated to Dharma, Śiva and other deities performed by peoples mostly belonging to the lower ranks of society. These festivals consist of dancing around the fire, procession with burning torches, fire gymnastics, walking on the fire, jumping upon burning woods and so on and can be connected with primitive fire cults, relics of which are found in the parallel European customs like May-Fire, Bon-Fire, Midsummer-Fire, etc.

The ceremonies of Gājana and Caḍaka mentioned above have also a close bearing on the primitive conceptions of death and resurrection. In many parts of Bengal the dead spirit of vegetation—Dharma, Śiva or anything, even the *Caḍaka-tree*, is kept under water for the whole year in a pond and during the Gājana the image is recovered in which the power of life is ceremonially infused, as if the dead is brought back to life again. The throwing of images into water and the mourning for them recall the European custom of throwing the dead spirit

[1]X.16.5; R.T.H. Griffith, *Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, II, Varanasi, 1963, p. 402.

of vegetation under the name of Death, Yarlis, Kostroma and so on into the water and lamenting over it. Keeping the vegetation deity submerged under water is a well known and widely current form of rain magic, and we have instances in which certain stones are conceived as the rain-making god, and at the time of drought they are carried in procession and dipped in a stream. A banana-leaf serves as the only garment of the priest performing the bathing rite of Dharma and this reminds us of the ceremonial nudity connected with rain and fertility charms.

The magical use of wine, so common in fertility and funeral rites, also finds expression in these ceremonials. A gigantic vessel of wine called *Bhāṇḍāl* is brought in front of the deity. Dances are held around it and the participants become quite intoxicated. In many cases mock or actual fights are held among the participants for the possession of the vessel. In some places of the Birbhum District, the Dharma or Śiva stone is carried in procession to the house of a Śuṇḍi (belonging to the caste of wine-makers) who anoints it with oil and wine. At places again, the actual task of brewing is performed before the god. The death and resurrection theme also finds expression in the ritual of a real deadbody in which a game is played with a head of a dead person. The *Bāṇavrata* of Śiva is also a ritual connected with corpse in which a human skull is anointed with vermilion and oil which becomes the occasion of a collective dance in which the priests and devotees are the participants. It is also interesting to note that the participants of the Gājana and Caḍaka rituals follow the custom of maintaining for one month the traditional state of impurity by using mourning dress made of unwashed raw cotton, by hanging around the neck a key which is the specific mark of death in the family, by eating sun-dried rice self-cooked in a secluded spot which is done by the kinsmen of the dead, by abstaining from sexual intercourse, sleeping on the ground, allowing the hair, beard and nails to grow and so on, which are exclusively funeral observances. The common Hindu rule is that when a death takes place, the kinsmen of the dead must consider themselves as impure until the *Śrāddha* ceremony is performed. This is called *Aśauca-pālana* or maintaining the state of impurity. The whole thing therefore appears to be a miming of a very primitive ritual-mourning, centering round the myth of annual death and resurrection of a vegetation deity—an Indian parallel of Adonis, Attis or Osiris—who symbolized the spirit of corn, dying every year and

again rising from the dead.

Such ideas of death and revival, which very often found expression in popular beliefs and customs, rituals and festivals, of the types mentioned above, had evidently made their way into the realm of higher thoughts and contributed immensely to the shaping of various eschatological doctrines. That there is a soul in man and similar spirits in trees, plants, birds, animals and others and that they are all capable of remaining dissociated from their outward forms is an old prevailing belief. While there were the tribal totems suggesting the habitation of a man's spirit in specific trees and animals, with the elaboration of the magico-religious theories accepting the essence of such tribal beliefs it was henceforth natural that the doctrine of metempsychosis could not have been delayed for long in its appearance. That the soul does not perish with the body and that there is some thing of a man that survives the dissolution of his physical body is at the basis of all funeral observances of the Vedic-age. Still in the *Rgveda* this idea is indistinct. Here the human body is conceived as a conglomeration of various elements which, after one's death, return to their respective sources.[1] Still there are a jew passages which seem to suggest something like an inner soul distinct from the elements.[2] After death the man goes to the realm of the blessed, where Yama or Varuṇa rules as the king. We also come across a description of this realm,[3] but the *Rgveda* is silent as to how this journey is possible, whether it is the soul that goes to the celestial abode or whether it is possible for the soul to be endowed with the virtues or vices of the individual. Likewise the *Rgveda* contains a description of the realm of the unblessed which is not a very dangerous place. The gods did punish the offenders, but the punishment came in the form of disease, poverty or suffering on earth in one's physical life, and not any frightful suffering after death.

The idea of renovation, new life after death, was naturally known in the Rgvedic age, because such ideas were likely to develop empirically from the observation of plant life. But the problem confronted by the ancients was how the change from one state to another

[1]cf. *Rgveda*, X.16.3.
[2]I.113.16; I.140.8; X.15.1.
[3]IX.113.7ff.

would take place. What should be the medium through which life after death is possible? The idea of soul as its medium was not developed fully in the *Ṛgveda*. In the subsequent period when the idea of soul was definitely established the problem was how this soul could be the container of virtues and vices by which the fate of the new-life, whether in heaven or in hell or again in the world, would be determined. An animistic soul with shape and size, a material soul, may absorb the essence of virtues or vices, but such an idea goes against the soul theory itself. Soul, by its very conception, can not be material in the ultimate analysis. It can act only as a passive spectator within the body. It is the body that acts, enjoys and suffers. The soul remains stainless and unaffected. And once the doctrine of the soul is upheld, the problem naturally arises whether different souls reside in different bodies or the soul is a single entity manifested in different bodies. In fact, the idea of soul as the medium of rebirth involves many difficulties and contradictions.

The Brāhmaṇa literature, which often refers to repeated and endless cycles of births and deaths, has not also been successful in building up a complete and coherent theory of transmigration. Here it is stated that the sacrificer's alliance with the gods continues unabated even after his departure from worldly life. For the blessed, the next life, reached through the way of the gods (*Arcirādi, Devayāna*) or that of the fathers (*Dhūmādi, Pitṛyāna*) is the continuation of his life in the company of the gods and the manes, and the enjoyment of new life rests on the nature of the new entrant's *Karma* or deeds in his worldly life. The concept of *Karma* which is inextricably blended with the later theories of transmigration has only made an imperfect appearance in the Brāhmaṇa literature like that of the soul carrying the effects of *Karma* from one stage to another. It is only in the Upaniṣads that we come across a definite formation of the premises foreshadowing the later doctrine that rebirth takes place in this world of existence, the transmigration being caused by soul capable of infusing the essence of one's good or bad *Karma* into the next life. It is of course a popular formulation based on the purely ethical consideration that good work in this life will yield good result in the next life and bad work will yield bad result. This formulation has no logical *locus standi* because soul, in the sense of real soul, can have nothing to do with the activities of material life.

The *Bhagavadgītā*, in which we have a very concrete formulation of the ideas of rebirth and transmigration also says that despite everything soul is such an entity which is spotless and unaffected by human actions, good or bad.

> Know that (i.e. soul) to be indestructible which pervades all this; the destruction of that inexhaustible (principle) none can bring out. These bodies appertaining to the embodied (self or soul) which is eternal, indestructible, and indefinable, are said to be perishable; therefore do engage in battle, O descendant of Bhārata! He who thinks it to be the killer and he who thinks it to be killed, both know nothing. It kills not, is not killed. It is not born, nor does it ever die, having existed does it exist no more, unborn, everlasting, unchangeable and primeval it (the soul) is not killed when the body is killed. O son of Pṛthā! how can that man who knows it thus to be indestructible everlasting, unborn and inexhaustible, how and when can he kill, whom can he cause to be killed? As a man, casting off old clothes, put on others and the new ones, so the embodied (self or soul) casting off old bodies, goes to others and new ones. Weapons do not divide it (the soul) into pieces; fire does not burn it; waters do not moisten it; the wind does not dry it up. It is not divisible; it is not combustible; it is not to be moistened: it is not to be dried up. It is everlasting, all pervading, stable, firm an eternal. It is said to be unperceived, to be unthinkable, to be unchangeable. Therefore knowing it to be such you ought not to grieve. But even if you think that it is constantly born, and constantly dies, still, O you of mighty arms! You ought not to grieve thus. For to one that is born, death is certain; and to one that dies, birth is certain.[1]

Thus the soul theory of the *Bhagavadgītā* has nothing to do with the concept of *Karma*. That the soul cannot be the container of virtues and vices is also stated in the Upaniṣads. According to the doctrine of the five fires, as found in the *Chāndogya*,[2] the itinerant soul abides within the sun, the moon, the stars, the ether, the wind, the plants, the seeds, etc. which presupposes the belief in the all-pervading character of the soul. The conception of this all pervading nature of the individual soul had given rise to the idea equating it with the world-principle, the universal soul, i.e. the *Brahman*. The full-fledged doctrine of five fires or Pañcāgni-vidyā is a combination of

[1]Ch. II; Eng. tr. K.T. Telang in *Sacred Books of the East*, VIII, pp. 44-45.
[2]V.3-10.

three different lines of speculation—the doctrine of *Karma* or of post-mortem rewards and punishments for good or bad actions, the doctrine of metempsychosis which made it possible for the rewards and punishments being meted out in the world below, and the doctrine of two paths, the successive stages of the soul's ascent or descent. These have been put forward quite arbitrarily. In the first chapter of the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* it is said that the transmigratory souls begin a downward motion from the moon through the clouds to the human semen. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*[1] it is said that Indra assuming the form of an eagle carries the souls over dangerous pathways and hands them over to the wind-god who ultimately takes them to their resting place in the abode of the blessed. Such conceptions have a mythological tinge and are reflections of the popular ideas. In the great symposium at Janaka's court which is described in the third chapter of the same Upaniṣad, Jāratkārava asked Yājñavalkya: 'What is the condition of the soul when it leaves the human body? Does it thereafter lead an embodied or disembodied existence?' Yājñavalkya did not give answer to this question publicly.

Thus, according to the Brāhmaṇical stream of thought, every living being has a permanent soul which remains unaffected by the actions of an individual, and which is regarded as the carrier of the effects of Karma and as a link between one life and another. The inherent contradictions by which this Brāhmaṇical conclusion is characterized have been challenged by the Buddhists on the following grounds. How can an eternal substance which is pure by nature and fully liberated be linked with another object which is evanescent, impure and unliberated? Moreover, the existence of an eternal soul can not be established by direct perception or valid inference. The Buddha categorically said that as it was impossible to locate the flame of lamp after it had been extinguished, so it was absurd to look for a soul after death.[2] According to the Buddhists, *attā* or soul does not exist. It is only a word of common usage (*lokasāmaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohāro lokapaññattiyo*)[3] and does not correspond to any entity; hence no question should arise as to its existence. But the problem of the Buddhists was how to explain, without admitting the existence of soul, the transference of the effects of Karma after

[1] III.3.
[2] *Saṃyutta Nikāya* III, PTS, p. 46.
[3] *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, PTS, p. 202.

death. According to the Buddha this problem can be explained on the basis of the fact that every being is in a continuous process of change, and the process is governed by the law of casual sequence which means that change is effected every moment and by the immediately preceding causes and conditions. A living being, composed of five *skandhas* or elements is always in a state of becoming, i.e. in a state of flux. How this principle works out in the Buddhist scheme of transmigration will be explained later, but one point which should not escape our notice is that this formulation is strikingly in agreement with the primitive tribal conception of life-cycle which is also thought of as a flux causing death and rebirth in every turning point of life and calling forth the rites of life-cycle, including those performed at puberty.

We have already pointed out that the conception of soul as a material or near-material entity carrying and transplanting the effects of Karma from one life to another is based on a purely ethical consideration arising out of the agricultural maxim: as you sow, so you reap. In spite of their non-soul theory, the Buddhists accept this ethical consideration and emphasize upon the transmission of the Karma from one life to another. In the *Suttanipāta* it is stated that all beings are born of and subject to their Karma or past deeds and it is on account of these that one becomes a cultivator, an artist or a king.[1] In the *Aṇguttara Nikāya* there is an agricultural simile to illustrate the place of Karma in the future existence of a being. Here action or Karma has been equated with Kṣetra or field, consciousness or Vijñāna with Bīja or seed, and thirst or Tṛṣṇā with Sneha or water. Ignorance or Avidyā regulates thirst and thereby settles the higher or lower states of future existence. To explain the process of rebirth the Buddhists apply the law of casual sequence. The Saṃskāras represent the accumulated effects of Karma left in a being before his rebirth. The results of acts done in the previous life are transmitted to that consciousness which brings about re-existence. This consciousness is equated with seed.

On account of Avidyā, i.e. lack of true knowledge, a person becomes victim of Saṃskāra or impressions left on mind. The function of Saṃskāra of previous existence is to produce the thought with which a being is reborn and the mental states, known as Vijñāna,

[1] *Suttanipāta*, 653-54.

which are all dependent on deeds of past life representing pre-conceptual forces.[1] The mental states (*Vijñāna*) in their turn lead to mind and matter, making the inception of the present life of being. The very fact that a man is born implies that he could not get rid of ignorance and its consequent thought-impressions in the past life. Mind and matter are collectively known as Nāma-rūpa which yield the six organs of senses (*Ṣaḍāyatana*) calling forth Sparśa or sense of contact, Vedanā or feeling and Tṛṣṇā or craving. These constitute Upādāna or preconditions of existence and Bhāva or desire for existence. Bhāva has a two-fold significance —Karma-bhāva, i.e. existence according to one's past deeds, and Utpatti-bhāva, i.e. the plane of existence where a being is reborn. Bhāva leads to Jāti or rebirth. It is neither an entity, nor an individual, but just a conglomeration of Nāma-rūpa or mind and matter that takes rebirth in a changed form, the change being effected by its past deeds and conditioned by time and space. This transformation takes place ceaselessly and uninterruptedly like water flowing in a stream. The consciousness by which a being seeks rebirth is known as Pratisandhi-Vijñāna with the help of which the effects of Karma, stored in Saṃskāras of past life, are transmitted to the next life.

The Jains also believe in transmigration of soul and in rebirth and also in the doctrine of Karma. But the Jain ideas relating to all these are basically different from the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist ideas. Soul is conceived in Jainism as a material substance. Technically it is known as Jīva which is also the term to denote animate entities. It is capable of expansion and contraction according to the dimensions of the physical body with which it is associated for the time being. It becomes co-extensive with the body. Though it has no form, it acquires, just like a lamp which remaining the same illumines the whole of the space enclosed in a small or big room in which it happens to be placed, the size and form of the body wherein it lives.[2] It is in this way that a Jīva though formless is said to occupy space or possess extension. Owing to the inclinations generated by its past action a Jīva comes to inhabit different bodies successively. Whilst the knowledge possessed by the Jīva may be boundless, that which it actually possesses is fragmentary due to the obscuration caused

[1] *Visuddhimagga*, PTS, pp. 557ff.
[2] *Syādvādamañjarī*, with Hemādri's Com. 8; *Tattvārthādhigama-sūtra*, p. 16.

by Karma. That is why it suffers and enjoys the fruits of its deeds, and then, in consequence of the Karma it has acquired, goes through the succession of rebirths, and finally obtains liberation through the destruction of its Karma.

In Jainism Karma is also conceived as something essentially material which gets attached to the soul just as dust gets attached to the cloth. Hence the highest goal of the Jains is to get rid of all old Karma and to stop the influx of any new one. Karma is the link between the Jīva and its empiric outfit, the body. Karma by its association with Jīva soils its nature and this consequent lapse of the Jīva from its pure state is called bondage. Not to speak of the animals and plants, the Jains think that everything of the world — even the four elements—are bodies of the soul and hence can be obscured by the defilement of Karma.

> The defilement of the souls takes place in the following way. Subtle matter ready to be transformed into Karma pours into the soul (i.e. Jīva); this is called influx (*āsrava*). In the usual state of things a soul harbours passion (*kaṣāya*) which acts like a viscous substance and retain the subtle matter coming into contact with the soul; the subtle matter thus caught by the soul enters, as it were, into a chemical combination with it; this is called binding (*bandha*) of Karma-matter. The subtle matter 'bound' or amalgamated by the soul is transformed into eight kinds of Karma, and form a kind of subtle body (Kārmaṇa-śarīra) which clings to the soul in all its migrations and future births and determines the individual state.[1]

The actions of mind, speech and body continually produce certain subtle Karma-matters which pour themselves into the Jīva and stick there by coming into contact with its passions. These passions are collectively called Kaṣāya. They act like viscous substances in retaining the impouring Karma-matter. The Kaṣāyas result in tying men to the cycle of rebirth. They cannot be removed except by control of the senses. Their motives are said to be space, object and body. They depend on impressions made by all colours, different kinds of taste and smell, and the four sensations–warm, cold, soft and rough—and these they have in common with the central offences and all other sins.[2]

[1]H. Jacobi in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, pp. 168-69.

[2]The effects of the Kaṣāyas are given in details in *Dasaveyāliya*, VIII.37-39; cf. *Sūyagaḍa*, I.1.4.11ff; 1.2.2.29; 1.9.11.

Like the generality of Indian systems, Jainism believes in soul's transmigration, but its conception of Karma, the governing principle of transmigration, is unlike that of any other. The Karma-matter accumulated round the soul during the infinite number of past lives is technically called *Karmaśarīra*, which encircles the soul as it passes from birth to birth. In the Ṛgvedic eschatology, as we have seen above, there is no direct reference to the soul's transmigration or to the doctrine of rebirth in any form, though the idea was prevalent. In the Brāhamaṇa literature, however, we come across the idea of repeated births and deaths, but the idea had not been established in a theoretical set-up. It is only in the Upaniṣads that we come across a clear development of the theory of transmigration of soul in three distinct stages. In the first state the earlier Vedic idea of heaven or the abode of Yama has been replaced by the conception of *Yāna* or way, of the father (*pitṛ*) or of the *gods* (*deva*). In the second stage the doctrine of transmigration is presented without any reference to the idea of Karma or reaping the fruits of deeds. In the final stage, however, we have a complete presentation of the transmigration of soul strictly in terms of the doctrine of Karma. According to the merits and demerits, a man earns through his actions, he will have to take birth again and again in this world. Good deeds in one life secure a better future for the next life,and this process works out until one achieves the final salvation. Needless to say that Jainism, and also Buddhism, drew much from this Upaniṣadic conception. One thing that deserves special notice in this connection is that the transmigrating souls of the Jains are supposed to have various shapes and sizes. It is of the same size as the body. In the incipient stages, when it enters the body it is very small, but having entered once it expands itself so as to fill up the body entirely. Again when it is about to leave the body it resorts to a process of contraction and comes out of the body as a minute particle. The conception of the shape and size of souls bears a stamp of primitive animistic beliefs.[1]

[1]N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Jain Philosophy: Historical Outline*, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 146ff.

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